



# JEW S ON THE FRONTIER

RELIGION AND MOBILITY IN  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

SHARI RABIN





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# **Jews on the Frontier**

**Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America**

**Shari Rabin**



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# Introduction

## Judaism, America, Mobility

In 1858, seventeen-year-old Edward Rosewater was learning the telegraph trade and roaming the Midwest trying to find a job. Born in Bukovan, Bohemia, but raised in Cleveland, Ohio, he now passed through Cincinnati, Oberlin, parts of Kentucky, and St. Louis in search of work before getting a job as a telegraph operator in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He later relocated to Stevenson, Alabama; Nashville; and Washington, D.C., before finally settling in Omaha, Nebraska. As he moved in and out of places with and without Jewish communities, Rosewater's religious life was flexible, to say the least. In his diary, he rarely mentioned Jewish holidays but described sending valentines and noted "Washington's Birth Day." He attended church semi-regularly, including Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, and Episcopalian services as well as a Tennessee camp meeting, and he read the Book of Mormon, which he deemed "a big lot [of] trash."

Rosewater remained close to his family, sending them money and letters, even as he had a variety of interactions with the non-Jews who surrounded him, ranging from fistfights to courtships. He rode trains and worked the telegraph on Saturdays, violating the Sabbath, and ate non-kosher food, including Alabama barbecue and pork rinds. And yet Rosewater's diary does show evidence of traditional Jewish interests. He attended synagogue when in larger cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Nashville, and interacted with some of America's great rabbis. When Rabbi Bernard Illowy stopped in Nashville en route to a new position in New Orleans, Rosewater showed his son around, and later on, when visiting the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, he "found [rabbi Isaac Mayer] Wise & [Max] Lilienthal there. Introduced myself to Wise & showed them [the] Indian Gallery."

It is unclear whether Rosewater prayed privately or read Jewish books, but he did find religious meaning in nature, history, and literature. He wrote of Tennessee's Nickajack Cave, "How great is God[. T]o look on & not feel how small we are would be impossible." In 1861 he read *Pillar of*

*Fire, or Israel in Bondage*, an 1859 novelization of the Hebrew Bible's Exodus story, albeit one that was written by an Episcopalian minister. On the first day of 1861, on the cusp of the Civil War, he turned reflective, poignantly drawing on Jewish New Year's imagery regarding the Book of Life to interpret the secular New Year: "oh what may this Book of my fate be destined to contain[.] The pages now blank may be filled with Descriptions horrible or at least strange." That same year he fasted twice, once on the national day of fasting called by President Buchanan, January 4, and again on Yom Kippur.<sup>1</sup> Rosewater would eventually achieve some renown as the man who telegraphed the Emancipation Proclamation and founded the *Omaha Bee* newspaper. He became the founding president of Omaha's Hebrew Benevolent Society, and twenty years later he was described as having "a tender feeling towards his coreligionists, notwithstanding that he manifests no interest in congregational affairs."<sup>2</sup> Throughout his travels Rosewater created religious life on his own, using sources that were Jewish, Christian, both, and neither.

Rosewater is hardly the typical starting point for a study of nineteenth-century American religion. He was not a minister, nor was he a faithful congregational member. He was a religiously promiscuous single male during a period renowned for its sectarianism, domestic piety, and feminization.<sup>3</sup> And of course, he was a Jew in a time and place we think of as dominated by Protestantism. Rosewater does not fit any better within existing scholarship on American Judaism, however. He has little place within the mass of studies on post-1880 urban Jews or the small number of monographs that focus on nineteenth-century synagogues.<sup>4</sup> And yet, why not start with Rosewater? This book argues that his case is not a peripheral one of religious deterioration through secularization, Protestantization, assimilation, or apathy. Rather, he is an exemplar of American religion, albeit not as it is typically understood. From his perspective, congregations, denominations, coherent ideologies, and singular identities are not obvious starting points, but rather are particular strategies of stability that coexist and compete with others within a nation overrun by mobile strangers.

There has been much talk in recent years of the "nones," a growing category in national surveys of religious attitudes. These Americans declare no formal religious affiliation while still admitting to some forms of religiosity. According to the 2012 Pew Research Center poll, more than

two-thirds of nones believed in God and more than half prayed regularly; many also engage in other kinds of religious practices. Indeed, scholar Elizabeth Drescher found that nones embraced as spiritual practices “enjoying time with family,” “enjoying time with pets or other animals,” “enjoying time with friends,” and “preparing or sharing food.”<sup>5</sup> While fearful religious leaders and pundits alike have described it as a new, postmodern phenomenon, this book argues that such eclecticism dates at least to Rosewater and is arguably the default setting of American religion.<sup>6</sup>

Over three decades ago, Robert Orsi began to use the case of American Catholicism to develop the theory of “lived religion,” or “the creative working of real men and women—using inherited, improvised, contested and contradictory religious idioms—with the actual circumstances of their lives.”<sup>7</sup> More recently, another prolific scholar of twentieth-century American Catholicism, Thomas Tweed, has argued that religions are “confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries.”<sup>8</sup> This book builds on these groundbreaking studies, arguing for the importance of ethnicity, ritual, practice, and movement in a field long preoccupied with Protestantism, ministers, and institutions.<sup>9</sup> In its focus on nineteenth-century Jews it also sheds new light, revealing these phenomena to be rooted in larger structures of race, economics, and the law, and dating to the beginnings of the nation. Although they were a tiny proportion of the population, Jews’ profound change in status upon migration to the United States and their ongoing struggles within it highlight in relief the subtle and often surprising power dynamics of the United States and their resultant religious orientations.

Jews first came to what became the United States in 1654 and established a community in New Amsterdam, which was followed soon after by Philadelphia, Savannah, Charleston, and Newport. American independence in 1776 began to transform these “port Jews,” oriented across the sea, into mobile Jews looking west, a process accelerated by a mass migration from German-speaking lands. Between 1820 and the Civil War, America’s Jewish population increased fifty-fold, from around 3,000 to 150,000, and it would expand again, to roughly 250,000, by 1877.<sup>10</sup> These Jews arrived during the heyday of westward expansion and of

Manifest Destiny, an ideology that argued for the United States' inevitable—and divinely sanctioned—domination of the American continent.

As the title of Emanuel Leutze's iconic mural announced from the walls of the U.S. Capitol Building: "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way." This work, painted by a German immigrant during the first year of the Civil War, depicted the peaceful journey of diverse settlers bringing civilization and agriculture to an empty idyll. The painting is almost entirely empty of Native Americans, although included in the struggles and triumphs of the emigration it depicts are immigrants, farmers, adventurers, women, children, and a single freed African American man, added to the painting following Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. At the apex of the painting, a figure hoists an American flag, uniting the darkness of the East and the golden light of the great West. This vision of a benign and inclusive Manifest Destiny was authorized—and in this case, commissioned and displayed—by the American state, even as it obscured the violent crucibles of native displacement and racial capitalism in which it was forged.<sup>11</sup>

The United States thus sacralized a politics of mobility that was not only triumphant or exploitative, but remarkably fluid and uncertain, especially for Jews.<sup>12</sup> Jews and their fellow migrants came from places in Europe where religious identity was a bureaucratic category that determined one's possibilities for residence, travel, economic opportunity, and religious life. In the United States, by contrast, such regulations were almost nonexistent for those who were determined to be white and male. These Americans could up and move at the drop of a hat. Their identity—and that of anyone they knew—could be a product of their own creation as much as a fact of personal history. "Freaks of fortune" could send them careening upward in wealth one day, while accidents, fraud, or poor luck could destroy it the next.<sup>13</sup> Religious life was hardly immune from these realities. Without government-supported communities or reliable authorities, where could you procure kosher meat? Alone in the American wilderness, how could you find nine coreligionists for a *minyan* (prayer quorum)? Without identity documents, how could you really know that someone was Jewish? Indeed, the frontier of this book's title refers not only to western lands, in the deterministic formulation of Frederick Jackson Turner, or to the intense social worlds that developed upon them. Rather, it refers to what Jewish studies scholar Sander Gilman has

described as “the conceptual and physical space where groups in motion meet, confront, alter, destroy, and build,” interactions that are profoundly shaped by economic and political realities.<sup>14</sup> In the context of American state formation, and for a minority group in a new land, such frontiers were particularly intense and hardly restricted to the West.

To be sure, not everyone at the time saw mobility, the frontier, or even America as religious problems. For some, they offered a liberating path out of religious identity and practice. Still others believed that environmental factors were irrelevant to religious life. Radicals, both Reform and Orthodox, most of whom lived in eastern cities with large Jewish populations, claimed that “true Judaism” was already suitable to all locales. In 1848 Orthodox rabbi Abraham Rice referenced the sixteenth-century code of Jewish law, arguing, “if we all act according to our [*Shulkhan Arukh*], one Jew can live in one corner of the world + yet we have with him one rule + regulation.”<sup>15</sup> While Rice insisted on the relentless observance of rooted *halakhic* (Jewish legal) practices no matter where or when, Reform rabbi David Einhorn believed that the purified religious spirit was the portable and exportable core of Judaism. In 1855, soon after arriving in the United States, he defined Judaism as “the covenant between God and man which is binding for all times, in all places and on all peoples.”<sup>16</sup> Jewish universalism was not only historical and anthropological, but also geographical.

And yet for most Jews, the relationship between Judaism and American mobility was a fraught one that occasioned debate and inspired adaptations. These Jews did things like eat non-kosher beef but not pork, eschew congregational membership but live in a Jewish boardinghouse, or marry a non-Jewish woman but insist that their children were Jewish, *halakhah* be damned. They worked to create stable identities and lives on their own and through new institutions, ideologies, and movements, including congregations, denominations, and religious reform. And yet these forms, the usual terrain of American religious history, were only the most prominent among a wide array of religious strategies for grappling with mobility. Whether they embraced or rejected them, mobile Jews were, in their own words, the “happy medium,” or the “modern-minded.”<sup>17</sup> They were not eager assimilationists, not adamant reformers, and not staunch traditionalists, but rather ordinary Jews who were flexible, open-minded, and pragmatic.



They referred to themselves as Jews, Yehudim, and Hebrews, but most often as Israelites, invoking a noble lineage of biblical wanderers. For this book I have gathered hundreds of stories of such Jews, selecting them not because of their DNA or name alone, and not because they measured up against a normative standard of legal observance or congregational membership. Rather, in the absence of governmental classification, which made the United States so unique, I include as Jews those who situated themselves within Jewish community in some way, no matter how successful, consistent, or positive their experiences were. For this reason, I largely avoid quantitative data, seeking instead to maintain the lived complexity and ambivalence of individual Jewish lives. Evidence of their activities and ideas is scattered, but nonetheless surges forth from press sources, late-in-life memoirs, letters, and diaries; from minutes and press reports of the congregations and institutions in which they were founders, members, and troublemakers; and from articles and sermons where they were exhorted and cast as thorns in the sides of prominent leaders.

Indeed, that most Jews seemed to be like Edward Rosewater concerned American Jewish leaders, including congregational presidents, local religious functionaries, and big-city rabbis, including the most famous American Jewish figures of this period, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and Isaac Leeser. These two men loom large in studies of nineteenth-century American Judaism as the prime movers and shakers behind Reform and Orthodoxy, respectively. They were important figures with many disagreements, to be sure, but both were also profoundly shaped by the mobility that surrounded them. Leeser had immigrated to Richmond, Virginia, from Westphalia in 1824 at age eighteen and eventually become a *hazan*, a non-rabbinic religious functionary, in Philadelphia. In 1843 he founded America's first lasting Jewish periodical, the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, which he edited until his death in 1868. Wise, more than a decade younger than Leeser, had arrived from Bohemia in 1846 and, after a tumultuous tenure at a congregation in Albany, New York, settled in Cincinnati in 1854. There he founded the *Israelite* and remained an active figure in American Jewish life until his death in 1900.<sup>18</sup> Leeser and Wise were particularly important leaders and thinkers because they traveled continuously and maintained correspondence throughout the continent, keeping their ears close to the ground of American Jewish life. Disconcerted by what they saw as the chaos of idiosyncratic local Jewish

institutions and practices, they became fierce advocates of congregations, of moderating ideologies, and of a national Jewish “union.” They continually chastised but also solicited a mass of misbehaving Jews who created their own religious lives through unauthorized markets and networks of people, objects, and ideas. More than a “creative working of . . . idioms” or an “organic-cultural flow,” as Orsi or Tweed would have it, religion for these Jews—perpetually on one frontier or another—was a mobile assemblage of resources for living.<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \*

In this account, mobility is central, not only as an aggregate of individual experiences but as a shared milieu and *mentalité* of the frontier. It was produced by a constellation of legal, geographic, and economic factors and resulted in unprecedented anonymity, isolation, uncertainty, and scarcity. While much of the material for this study comes from small-town communities and individual migrants in the antebellum South and West, it includes Jews from all regions across six decades and those who moved constantly as well as those who moved rarely. Few American Jews, diverse though they were, were immune from the dramatic effects of mobility on their families and communities. What follows is a portrait of these Jews and the range of new religious possibilities they encountered and created in what I take to be American Judaism’s formative era, the short nineteenth century.

Part 1 of this book begins by laying out the United States’ political and legal contexts, which enabled an unfettered Jewish mobility unknown in Europe, but premised on individualism and the invisibility of religious difference (chapter 1). It then explores the costs and benefits of the new social world it fostered for Jewish immigrants and their coreligionists reared in eastern cities (chapter 2). Mobility fueled the desire for stable social life but also complicated its institutionalization, especially in congregations. Part 2 explores the consequences of mobility in distinct but intersecting spheres of religious life—family and the life cycle (chapter 3), and material culture and popular theology (chapter 4). It shows how ordinary Jews sought to create stable lives and identities within and outside nascent institutions and the strictures of Jewish law. These Jews—reformers and traditionalists alike—did not assimilate but developed new,

more expansive standards of Jewish authenticity on the road, in the market, and in relationship to the American state.

Part 3 turns to Wise, Leeser, and their allies who sought to order the diversity and eclecticism of American Jews on a national scale. Reconciling Judaism and unfettered mobility, they argued, required standardization and formalization, both institutionally (chapter 5) and ideologically (chapter 6). Although these leaders failed in their grandest projects, they succeeded in establishing the contours of an enduring and pervasive mobile infrastructure and mobile imaginary. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the International Order of B'nai B'rith, and Reform Judaism were all by-products and accelerants of the communications technologies, social sciences, and imperial formations of these broader systems, all of which sought to make Judaism compatible with American mobility.

In a Thanksgiving sermon in 1845, Isaac Leeser outlined his vision for Judaism in the United States:

This will, indeed, become a country where the Jew will have his home, where he may travel through its length and its breadth, and find brothers with whom he can worship, of whose food he may partake, and with whom he has the same hopes, with whom he has one God and Father.<sup>20</sup>

Leeser's description shows that mobility was central to the possibilities and challenges of the United States for Jews, perpetual exiles with a newfound manifest destiny. Seen from this angle, it is clear that in the nineteenth century, as today, American religion was not settled and was not restricted to the realm of belief or the walls of congregational worship spaces. Rather, as Leeser knew all too well, it was confusing, embodied, and, increasingly, created on the road. It is true that in this context many elements of Jewish life were cast aside and that those who moved tended to be those who were undisturbed by that prospect. But to understand American Judaism, we need to move beyond such binary understandings of Jews as Reform or Orthodox, observant or non-observant, good or bad. The same holds for American religion more broadly. Though our subject is a diverse and unwieldy one, if historians are going to nominate an

archetypal religious American, perhaps we should set aside the raucous evangelical preacher, the pious Christian mother, and the fervent Mormon pioneer. Maybe we should look instead to the mobile Jew, selectively revealing, expressing, and creating religion as he goes.

# **Part I**

## **Movement and Belonging**

## Wandering Sons of Israel

### Europe, America, and the Politics of Jewish Mobility

In 1848 Isaac Leeser looked to the liberal revolutions under way across the Atlantic and felt lucky. Well aware of the long and messy struggle for Jewish citizenship rights in Europe but hopeful about this opportunity for change, he published an editorial in his newspaper, the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, entitled “The Future.” In it, Leeser told his fellow American Jews,

Those who are natives or long residents of the United States . . . who have never had to obtain the permission of the police before they could depart from their domicile on a journey ever so short, of pleasure or business, unless they preferred to become acquainted with the comforts of a prison-house; can never realize what the nations of Europe have to glory over.<sup>1</sup>

At this moment, when it seemed that the Jews of central Europe might finally be treated as equals, Leeser took pains to convey the depths from which they would be lifted. He did so by referencing what was, to American Jews, the most obvious and yet profound of their many newfound rights: mobility. Jews had moved before, but, as Leeser indicated, they had been subject to governmental controls and/or limited in their geographical trajectories. Now their movement was freighted with endless opportunities but also with unprecedented challenges.

Jews had long been associated with mobility, a result of Christian violence and deep-rooted cultural representations. Already dispersed and without their own country, Jews throughout the Middle Ages were excluded from certain vocations, banned from landownership, and periodically expelled. This mobility fueled and was reinforced by the myth

of the “Wandering Jew,” whose cruelty to Christ at Cavalry had doomed him to walk the Earth until the second coming. Even in the United States, novels such as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Marble Faun* (1860) and Herman Melville’s *Clarel* (1876) perpetuated this image of Jews’ collective guilt and outsider status.<sup>2</sup>

The flesh-and-blood Jews roaming the expanding American continent understood and experienced mobility very differently, however. Movement was no longer a sign of strangeness, but a necessity for economic success and a privilege, one that was denied to many European Jews and to some Americans.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, for American Jews, mobility was both an outcome and a cause of their racial categorization. Historians of race have long argued that American Jews became white in the early twentieth century as a result of protracted social and cultural processes.<sup>4</sup> In the eyes of American law, however, Jews have been white from the beginning, a profound distinction from European governments that classified Jews *as* Jews. For American Jews in the nineteenth century, moving throughout an expanding continent, the effects of this new status were particularly dramatic.

Many Americans remained ambivalent about the effects of mobility, however, even among white men. On the one hand, westward expansion and economic success depended on bold movement into seemingly uncharted territory. On the other hand, excessive mobility seemed a threat to pious families and communities; the line between heroic adventurer and suspicious confidence man was unnervingly fine. Jews proved particularly confusing within this system, as politicians, diplomats, generals, and ordinary Jews themselves juggled racial, religious, and economic understandings of Jewish identity. Amidst this confusion, Jews and others would find that the full fruits of American life required the willingness to move and to submit to the consequences.

### **Immigration, Movement, and European Law**

Jews had been present in North America at least since 1654, and by 1820 Jews in the American colonies numbered a few thousand, largely residing in port cities on the Eastern Seaboard. By 1877, mass migration multiplied this population many times, to 250,000. Though most Jewish migrants initially came from German-speaking lands, especially Bavaria, over the



course of the nineteenth century their origins diversified, including places like England and Russia, Bohemia and Alsace. Among the early members of the Pittsburgh Jewish community in the 1850s, for example, were men from Prussia, Württemberg, Bavaria, Hamburg, Baden, Darmstadt, Posen, and Vilna, as well as a few from England. In the 1860s they were joined by a few Dutch and Galician Jews, as well as more Lithuanians and Prussians. Of the nine Jews living in Los Angeles in 1851, one was from France, two were from Poland, and six were from German lands.<sup>5</sup>

A variety of factors encouraged the mass migration of Jews and other Europeans to the United States in this period, including advances in transportation technology, the social ruptures of industrialization, rising birth rates, and political upheaval, including the failed liberal revolutions of 1848–1849 in which Leiser had placed such hope. For Jews, the drawn-out struggle for Jewish civic and political rights proved an additional motivation.<sup>6</sup> Immigration historians have shown that from Posen, more than two Jews left for every non-Jew who did. Even though Jews were only 1.5 percent of the Bavarian population, they constituted 5 percent of that kingdom's emigrants to America. As a result, between 1818 and 1871, Bavaria's Jewish population declined in absolute numbers. Even after some rights were granted to them piecemeal, Jews continued to migrate to the United States, seeking economic opportunity, social equality, and free mobility.<sup>7</sup>

Although Jews had a long history of movement in Europe, it was one marked by intense, if uneven, regulation. European governments were notable for three particularities: religious establishments, an expansive system of registering, documenting, and monitoring residents, and a persistent recognition and differentiation of ethnic, religious, and even economic groups, including, if not especially, of Jews. In the medieval period, European rulers had dealt not with individuals, but with local Jewish communities, which had the power to grant or deny the right of settlement to coreligionists.<sup>8</sup> Many governing bodies in central Europe required Jews to pay a body tax, or *Leibzoll*, in order to enter cities and cross borders. Expelled from England in 1290, Jews were not readmitted—and then only informally—until the 1650s, decades after England's settlements in America had begun. After expulsions in the fourteenth century, Jews were not admitted to most parts of France until the revolution in 1789. Smaller towns and regions, especially in northern Italy

and Germany, took to expelling Jews periodically throughout the medieval period and into the early modern era, and the devastating expulsions from Spain and Portugal in the 1490s redistributed Jewish populations across the globe, creating a transatlantic Sephardic diaspora that was mobile but still subject to governmental controls. It was the Portuguese exertion of such power that led to the first Jewish community in what would become the United States, a group of refugees from Recife, Brazil, who traveled to New Amsterdam.<sup>9</sup>

Into the nineteenth century, European governments—especially Russia, the Habsburg Empire, and the German states—continued to regulate mobility and to differentiate among Jews and other groups. This project was given new life by exclusivist strains of romantic nationalism, which argued that the nation was formed by a near-mystical connection between the land and the culture of its people.<sup>10</sup> This understanding of nationhood encouraged states to reinforce borders, monitor movement, and identify and surveil citizens, residents, and foreigners alike through internal passes, external passports, and a variety of other documents. As one 1854 English travel guide wryly noted, “the passport is the proof of a German’s existence.”<sup>11</sup> Also required were *Heimatscheine*, certificates of nationality and residency rights required for domestic travel, and *Sicherheitskarten*, residence permits. In some Prussian towns, documents known as *Aufenthaltskarten* were required to prove legal entry and residence. These documents recorded the holder’s religion, ethnicity, and/or economic position as a relatively fixed bureaucratic category.<sup>12</sup> This meant that even though many governments contemplated and enacted emancipatory laws, which gave Jews some citizenship rights, they continued to classify them as Jews. As a result, they were encouraged in some occupations and discouraged in others, their religious lives were conducted through government-supported Jewish communities, and their possibilities for landownership, residence, and travel were limited.

In their memoirs, written many years after the fact, Jewish migrants emphasized the hurdles they faced in order to move. William Frank, of Burgpreppach, Bavaria, who would become a founding member of the Pittsburgh Jewish community, traveled regularly as a journeyman weaver, but upon resolving to emigrate to America, had to obtain police permission to travel. He was warned that he would be arrested if he went further than the town of Edenkoben, about 175 miles away. Nonetheless he

traveled to a cousin in Landau, just past Edenkoben, who found a stage driver willing to lie to officials to get him into Weissenburg, on the French side of the border. From there he was able to get to the port at Le Havre and on to America.<sup>13</sup> The largest portion of Jewish immigrants to the United States were Bavarians like Frank, who were fleeing from particularly harsh restrictions on mobility, residence, and everyday life. In 1813 the still-new kingdom of Bavaria had passed a decree enacting, among other restrictions, the much-despised *Matrikel*, a registry of Jewish households in a particular place. Jews could move to a new place or marry only if another Jewish family had departed. Though Bavaria was only the size of South Carolina, Jews were banned from residing in the capital city, and it was decreed that “settlement in excess in communities where Jews already live, or settlement in areas where there are as yet no Jews, can be permitted only by the highest authority.” Non-Bavarian Jews could not enter the kingdom, and individual villages regularly forbade Jewish settlement altogether.<sup>14</sup>

While it is notoriously difficult to pinpoint the numerous, inconsistent, and ever-changing policies of nineteenth-century central European governments, Jews throughout German-speaking lands were treated as a distinct group. Their religious activities were supported through *Gemeinde*, official local communities funded by Jewish taxes. At the same time, they were subject to myriad policies variably intended to minimize Jewish populations and/or to eliminate economic and religious distinctiveness.<sup>15</sup> These policies included restrictions on mobility similar to those found in Bavaria. In 1854 Philip Whitlock, who had moved from his Russian hometown just across the border into Prussian Wloclawek (Leslau), found that he was expected “to procure a *pass* from the government to leave the country—or travel anywhere.” Seeking to emigrate to America but unable to afford the bribe that would procure him the necessary papers, he kept going, managing to narrowly avoid passport checks upon entering and exiting Berlin and again when boarding the ship in Bremen. Over fifty years later, Whitlock vividly recalled, “It is almost impossible to describe the fear and anxiety that I felt during that trip to Berlin, not knowing if this man [who aided him] will be successful in passing me, having in mind that I might be arrested and sent back to the place where I was born.”<sup>16</sup> Movement, Whitlock found, inevitably brought Jews into confrontation with the state.

Around half of German-speaking Jews lived in Prussia in the mid-nineteenth century, under twelve regional systems. Among acculturating Berliners, Poseners in the east, and their many coreligionists in between, all but a tiny number of elite Jews were restricted in their place of residence, with protection rights transferable only to a family's first-born child.<sup>17</sup> Such policies were also in place in the Habsburg Empire and the smaller German states. Eventual immigrant Adolf Hoenig remembered of Budapest in the 1850s that “no stranger could easily establish residence in the city. Every bird who flew in had to be reported to the police where he was given a passport with exact description of his personality.”<sup>18</sup> Jews had to have certificates like the one granted in 1850 to Rubin Abeles of Hochlibin, Bohemia, which gave him a four-year extension on his residence and declared him to “belong to the community . . . and hold the right to reside there.” Rural Jews in Baden were first granted freedom of migration in 1862, while in Saxony Jews were allowed to live only in Dresden and Leipzig, and even then in very small numbers with considerable restrictions.<sup>19</sup>

Amid these dizzying regulations, already in 1837 the German Jewish newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* reported, “Young men . . . cannot obtain right of settlement. What is left for them to do, but to search for another fatherland?”<sup>20</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century, Jews were gradually admitted to more towns and cities, and yet their residence and travel—like all political rights—continued to be considered contingent and revocable. Moving from one state to another was even more difficult than moving within a given state. Governments concerned with the integrity of the nation feared absorbing greater numbers of Jews, especially poor ones from places like Alsace in the west and Russia in the east. As one European Jewish historian put it, “the choice of residence in the pre-emancipation period [was] more dependent on legal factors than on the individual desires of the persons concerned.”<sup>21</sup> Full emancipation came in 1871, with the creation of a unified Germany, and even then, the *Gemeinde* system remained firmly in place for another five years, maintaining official ties between individual Jews, their communal institutions, and the government.<sup>22</sup>

Further east, in Russia, the legal and political structures were different but the experience of monitored mobility was much the same.<sup>23</sup> During his time in Russia in the late 1830s, Bavarian rabbi Max Lilienthal—who was

working at the government's behest to reform Jewish education—had to repeatedly show testimonials to various officials. In November 1843 he wrote to his father that he had “asked for permission to go to Munich; but the permission was denied me.”<sup>24</sup> By the reign of Alexander II in the mid-1850s, there were 750 Russian laws dealing with movement and residence of the empire's subjects. The Russian government struck “separate deals” with the empire's diverse ethnic groups, religious communities, and socioeconomic estates, and yet even the most universal declarations included special rules for Jews, both foreign and resident.<sup>25</sup>

The Russian government discouraged emigration and denaturalization, both of which could, ironically, be punished with “eternal banishment,” and legal emigration was so expensive and cumbersome that it was almost impossible until the 1860s. Those who left did so illegally, across the empire's massive land border. That is how Polish-born Henry Cohn left Russia, and it was why he faced troubles when he returned to Europe via London in 1863 carrying an American passport. As he recalled, “When I went to the Russian Consulat [*sic*] in order to have my visa stamped I was refused on the grounds that I had no reason to have become an American citizen.” At French and Prussian embassies, by contrast, “visa[s] were given to me without any question.” Upon returning to Russia he was detained by the police, which he noted was “not to my liking at all; I was no longer used to these depressing and unfree conditions.”<sup>26</sup>

For Cohn and other Russian Jews, emancipation was not on the table; they, like all Russians, were subjects of the tsar, not citizens of a nation-state. From 1835 until the Russian Revolution in 1917, with a small number of exceptions, Jewish residence was restricted to the Pale of Settlement region in the western part of the empire.<sup>27</sup> Within the Pale, Jews' rights of domicile rested with the local Jewish communal body, or *Kahal*, which was careful about granting rights to newcomers who might bring economic competition or drain local resources. This meant that poor Jews remained on the move and those seeking residence often needed an “affidavit of responsibility” from a local. All travel required a certificate establishing the holder's residence, economic stability, and morality, which served as a prerequisite, and sometimes a replacement, for a passport. Even when a Jew had settled somewhere, there was no guarantee that he or she could stay there if laws changed.<sup>28</sup>

While Jewish movement in central and eastern Europe was monitored, in France and England it was organized, occurring along predictable routes and with a passive but official oversight. There too, identities and movement were regulated to some extent, through documents like British “Poor Law’s Settlement Certificates” and French identity cards and passports, and yet Jews had full civic rights.<sup>29</sup> They could move and settle wherever they wanted, but they usually did so in consistent ways. Although new Jewish communities were established in British cities, the vast majority remained in London, and in France Jews tended to flow westward from Alsace to Paris. These Jews moved relatively short distances and yet, like their eastern neighbors, they did so *as* Jews who had access to government-supported religious bodies—namely, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the French Consistory.<sup>30</sup>

While in some places Jewish movement was limited merely by common practice, in most places it required passes to be carried, borders crossed, policemen confronted, bribed, or fooled. Once on the road, Jews traveled mostly through places that were dense with settled Jewish communities and government-supported Jewish institutions. No matter what European state a Jew came from, his or her Jewish identity was also a bureaucratic one, a mundane fact that profoundly shaped religious and social lives. In the United States they would be shaped by far different conditions: the near absence of government oversight and a proliferation of irregular and spontaneous mobility.

### **Movement, Citizenship, and U.S. Law**

Henry Cohn, who eventually returned to his native Russia, made a point of writing in his memoirs that “during my eleven years stay [in the United States] I never once saw a policeman or gendarme or soldier in uniform, the latter only one single one during my return home in the war year of 1863 in New York.”<sup>31</sup> Though his account was written later, in the context of early twentieth-century immigration debates, it reflects a real invisibility of state power to Jewish eyes. At this time, entry and exit into the United States did not require a passport, there were no limitations on immigration, and apart from the collection of census data every ten years, identities were never formally registered.<sup>32</sup>



American information gathering differed from European registration in degree but also in kind. The federal government had no formal religious affiliation and gathered no data about that of its citizens; gradually, over the course of the nineteenth century, individual states also did away with official support for religious congregations, making them entirely voluntary. Census takers took note of financial assets, and voting rights were limited to property holders (and to men) for much of the early republican era, but economic status was no more a stable bureaucratic category than was religion. The government was most straightforward in distinguishing Americans on the basis of race. Citizenship was open only to “free white persons” who resided in the country for a number of years, declared their intention to be naturalized, and renounced allegiance to other governments.<sup>33</sup>

Less well known but profoundly intertwined with these founding premises was the principle of what I am calling “unfettered mobility.” The 1777 Articles of Confederation had guaranteed that “the people of each state shall have free ingress and regress to and from any other state,” and while this was not mentioned in the Constitution of 1787, it continued to be affirmed as consistent with the “privileges and immunities” clause. In 1849 Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney reinforced its centrality, arguing, “We are all citizens of the United States, and as members of the same community must have the right to pass and repass through every part of it without interruption, as freely as in our own states.” Mobility was regularly affirmed as a central right conferred on white male individuals.<sup>34</sup>

Over the course of the nineteenth century, geographic and economic changes increased the scope of this mobility. Expansionist fervor pushed the borders of the nation steadily westward, successively through the 1804 Louisiana Purchase, the 1840s annexations of Texas and Oregon, and the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. With that, the United States largely completed its quest for continental sovereignty, gaining California and the remainder of the Southwest. All told, between 1840 and 1850 the United States grew by over one million square miles, to 2.9 million square miles.<sup>35</sup> Most of these new territories were claimed and occupied by native populations, but according to the U.S. government and its ideology of Manifest Destiny, they were future states open for untrammelled movement and settlement. Railroads facilitated this expansion, opening new regions to communication, settlement, and travel. In the 1850s alone, railroad



mileage in the United States more than tripled, culminating in the completion, on May 10, 1869, of the nation's first transcontinental railroad.<sup>36</sup>

Americans moved into these newly acquired territories in the hopes of becoming self-made men. The ongoing processes of industrialization were helping to create a robust but chaotic free-market capitalism in which individual success was more important than inherited rank. Interacting with strangers, white men acquired credit and customers less on the basis of intrinsic character and identity and more because of their convincing performance of proper manners and middle-class gentility. This emerging social and economic system reinforced particular understandings of religion, race, and gender. It offered new opportunities for ambitious immigrants, but it excluded and limited the movement of women and those whose identities were visibly marked.<sup>37</sup> Native Americans were encouraged to settle and forced to do so in particular places, while Mormons were denied settlement in successive places before pursuing residence in Utah. These expulsions, conflicts, and denials of the right to settlement had particular political causes but were also linked to these groups' collectivist religious and economic practices, which in public discourse were represented in racial terms.<sup>38</sup> African Americans were subject to unceasing regulation of their movement, especially in the aftermath of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Slaves had to carry passes or wear badges, and it was prudent even for free blacks to have appropriate papers on them at all times.<sup>39</sup>

Although Jews sometimes described themselves through the language of "race," most ordinary Americans—and more importantly, the apparatus of the state—saw Jews as white. Passports had no place for marking Jewishness, and even in their physical descriptions, representatives of the state seemed blind to allegedly Jewish characteristics. Henry Cohn's complexion was described as "florid," while both Jacob I. Cohen Jr. and Solomon A. Cohen (no relation) were "fair." While anti-Semitic stereotyping fixed on large Jewish noses, American officials labeled these men's as "aquiline," "common," and "small," respectively.<sup>40</sup> According to historian Craig Robertson, American immigration and customs officials "saw little value in documents, as they believed they could adequately identify a person standing in front of them." Individual situation and physiognomy mattered far more than bureaucratic status and origins.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, in the United States passports were not the widespread requirements they were in Europe, but merely requests “to permit [the holder] safely and freely to pass.”<sup>42</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century only 21,792 passports were granted, during a period in which the population grew to upwards of 20 million people, and it was only in 1835 that the Supreme Court decided that a passport did not in fact prove citizenship.<sup>43</sup> Beginning in the 1840s, applicants were expected to prove their citizenship and personal identity by affidavit, although there continued to be confusion about their purpose and meaning. This uncertainty and informality were distinctively American, as became abundantly clear in the 1850s amid two major international relations snafus involving Jews.

In 1853 conflict erupted over the status of the famous Hungarian nationalist Martin Koszta, who had moved to the United States following the failed European revolutions. For a white man like Koszta, entering and exiting the nation and attaining citizenship were relatively easy, even amidst rising nativist sentiment.<sup>44</sup> He declared his intention to become a citizen, but before he was officially naturalized, he traveled to Turkey, where he was taken prisoner by Austrian officials and subsequently rescued by the U.S. Navy. Although he did not have a passport, among the various papers he produced to validate his relationship to the United States and the legitimacy of its protection was a document produced by a New York notary public. This man, Joseph B. Nones, had created various certificates that “prov[ed] existing facts—to be noticed abroad,” and which he deemed more effective than court documents. He argued that the United States had no real passports, only proofs of citizenship, and that his document was more effective abroad than the existing certificate of intention that was granted to expectant citizens. Nones, a Jew with international travel experience, understood that outside the United States, documentation was the very basis of one’s possibilities for movement.<sup>45</sup>

The State Department requested that Nones stop producing his “Notarial Certificates of Affiliation and Identification” and consequently, in 1856, Congress limited passports to full citizens, giving sole authority over their issuance to the secretary of state.<sup>46</sup> Despite his dubious documentation, during the affair the government affirmed Koszta’s right to American protection. Even without official citizenship, U.S. Secretary of State William L. Marcy argued that international law gave “the national

character of the country not only to native-born and naturalized citizens, but to all residents in it who are there with, or even without, an intention to become citizens, provided they have a domicile therein.”<sup>47</sup> While this equation of domicile with national character—and thus with some protections of citizenship—would have been a surprise to the nation’s African Americans, for Jews it was remarkably inclusive. In many European countries, especially in German lands, domicile, national character, and citizenship were differentiated and highly politicized for Jews. In the United States they were given access to all as undifferentiated white individuals.

This politics of mobility and its significance for Jews were further elaborated in the same decade in the context of U.S. relations with Switzerland. In 1850 the two nations entered into a commercial trade and mutual immigration agreement. Most Swiss cantons banned Jewish settlement and commercial activity, and the trade agreement promised to extend these restrictions to Jews who were American citizens. Jewish groups vigorously protested the treaty, submitting a petition to Congress in April 1854.<sup>48</sup> American government officials were sympathetic to their complaints, with President Millard Fillmore asserting that “neither by law, nor by treaty, nor by any other official proceeding is it competent for the Government of the United States to establish any distinction between its citizens founded on differences in religious beliefs.”<sup>49</sup> For Americans, Swiss policies violated religious freedom, with religion defined as belief.

But the scandal was also about conflicting views of mobility, difference, and identity. The Swiss saw these as subject to official permission and requiring registration, while the United States did not. “American Israelites are liable to be expelled from certain cantons in Switzerland, where our people have not the right to settle,” Jewish leader Isaac Leeser wrote of the treaty.<sup>50</sup> He recognized this policy’s fundamental gap, asking,

Supposed an Israelite who has his American passport, in which his religion is not mentioned, should come to do business, say in Basel, where his religion is not tolerated, is he bound to let the municipal authorities know that he is a Jew?

In a *Charleston News* article reprinted in the *Israelite*, an author pointed out, “There is no restriction against the residence and pursuit of business of any Swiss, whatever be his religion, not only in the United States at large, but in any of their subdivisions—their separate States and Cities.”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, while Americans wanted to describe Jewish difference in religious terms alone, for the Swiss it was more intrinsic and immutable. This slippage became clear in 1857, when American ambassador Theo Fay questioned the Swiss government on the scope and justifications of their restrictions. One source told Fay of Swiss resistance, “if America seeks the emancipation of Jews in Switzerland, Switzerland would have a right to demand the abolition of slavery in the United States.”<sup>52</sup> Ultimately the commercial treaty was passed, with a modified but still discriminatory clause that limited the movement of American Jews in Switzerland until 1866, when the Swiss populace voted for equality of settlement for all groups.<sup>53</sup>

The Swiss treaty, like the Koszta affair, highlighted the remarkable freedom of the United States for immigrants perceived as white, whose difference was not marked as a visible social fact, and who were seen as able to contribute to the spread and growth of U.S. economic and political power. The U.S. government might have seen Jews as racially distinct or noticed that they possessed a religious tradition with communal tendencies, but for the most part, it did not. This meant that Jewish movement was not monitored and was not organized; it was unfettered, and from the perspective of ordinary Jews, even free. In a nation unwilling to ascribe, verify, or limit even national status to those who were not visibly different, identity was rooted in the here and now. The mobile American was a white, individually pious male whose primary affiliation was with his fellow citizens on the move.

### **Localism and Domestic Politics**

Abraham Kohn arrived in New York in 1842 and soon began peddling throughout New England. Kohn, who would soon settle in Chicago, described his occupation as “sell[ing] wares in the wild places of America, in isolated farmhouses and tiny hamlets.” As a white man, Kohn enjoyed unfettered movement, yet he found that in his capacity as a Jewish peddler

this was not always the case. He asked in his diary one day in the early 1840s, “Is it liberty of thought and action when, in order to do business in a single state, one has to buy a license for a hundred dollars?” Furthermore, he lamented, in America “one must profane the holy Sabbath, observing Sunday instead.” One Sunday in 1843 he reported in his diary that “at each house where I tried to sell my wares, I was told to go to church.”<sup>54</sup>

Kohn found out the hard way that while limited regulation and insistent individualism were celebrated as core values in the United States’ dealings abroad, at home they created new problems and new fears. Unlike the federal government, which encouraged mobility, state and local governments created countervailing legislation to impose order and stability, at least in economic life.<sup>55</sup> What seemed to stabilize American life, however, sometimes conflicted with Jewish practices, raising questions about the place of Jews in American life. This was true throughout the nineteenth century, but it was especially fraught during the Civil War. During that period, the high stakes of mobility and the distinctiveness of Jewish practices converged, leading some to propose—and ultimately reject—the legislation of Jews as a “class.”

Peddling in particular was seen as a form of mobility that was both necessary and suspect. Peddlers like Kohn brought needed goods to frontier settlements, yet they were also mysterious strangers whose goods promised instant self-transformation, eliciting consumer and even sexual seduction. Fearful of unfair competition and fraud, many cities and states took measures to limit peddling through licenses that varied in cost and requirements. Fees generally varied based on transportation means, scale of business, or geographic area, ranging from ten dollars upward. In North Carolina, peddlers had to show proof of citizenship; in 1846 Massachusetts passed a Hawkers and Peddlers Act with fees varying based on “morals and citizenship.”<sup>56</sup> Just as disturbing to local “moral establishments” was Sabbath-breaking, which similarly involved excessive mobility. Working on Sunday, many thought, not only violated the spirit of Christianity, but also injured laborers, society at large, and pious merchants. In response, local and state governments throughout the country enacted closing laws that made working on Sunday illegal.<sup>57</sup>

Although laws around peddling and the Sabbath were intended to curtail mobility on the basis of occupation or time alone, they disproportionately affected Jews. Many Jews had peddled in Europe, and even more did so in the United States, finding it the clearest path to stability as a small-town merchant or wholesaler. The work was labor-intensive and difficult, but it was an accessible entrée into the American economic system, especially for Jews, who relied upon one another to procure goods and find routes.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, working on Sunday made it impossible for Jews to observe a Saturday Sabbath, which was dictated by Jewish law and included its own strict limitations on movement.

Most Jews followed American law, purchasing licenses and quietly violating the Jewish Sabbath. As they had during their migrations from Europe, however, some Jews broke the rules. In 1841 an Indiana storekeeper asked Louis Stix to show his peddling license. He pretended to speak only French, he later recalled, in order “to avoid arrest and a fine for peddling without a license, which was a requirement in the state of Indiana.”<sup>59</sup> A small number of Jewish peddlers were fined or arrested for working on Sunday, and many more Jews complained.<sup>60</sup> When in Richmond, Virginia, in 1845 an “ordinance for the more effectual suppression of Sabbath-Breaking” was passed, local Jews objected on grounds of religious freedom. The law, they argued, was evidence of “one religion having *peculiar* privileges over the other.”<sup>61</sup>

One local newspaper responded to the Richmond Jews, asking whether “the Jews were not aware of this law or something similar, when they emigrated to this country and why did they come if it was so intolerable!”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Jews’ objections to Sunday closing laws and their overrepresentation in peddling did not go unnoticed. A typical 1852 newspaper story told of a customer’s mistreatment at the hands of a generic peddler, nonetheless described as “one of these wandering Jews.”<sup>63</sup> And when a Sunday closing law was proposed in California in 1855, State Speaker of the House William Stowe announced that he hoped they would “act as a prohibition to [Jews’] residence” in the state.<sup>64</sup> Concern about particular activities could transform into suspicion about Jews themselves, making local American officials sound an awful lot like their European counterparts.



This re-fettering of mobility and reconsideration of Jews recurred on a larger scale during the Civil War. Movement took on new meaning, as speculation and smuggling threatened both sides and the careful positioning of soldiers became a wartime necessity. Both Northern and Southern governments imposed new restrictions on movement for citizens and soldiers of all backgrounds, especially in the Confederacy and the Union-occupied areas of the South, where most military action occurred.<sup>65</sup> In September 1861 Isaac Cohen was issued a Confederate War Department pass allowing him “to quit *Nashville* upon his honor as a man, that he will not communicate in writing or verbally for publication any fact ascertained by him.”<sup>66</sup> William Flegenheimer of Richmond, who used connections to obtain passes to North Carolina during the war, nonetheless found that “my [bottle of] whiskey was the best passport I had.”<sup>67</sup> Civilians required passes, while enlisted men were moved throughout the country to training camps and battlefields on the basis of military orders. Individual furloughs were coveted rarities.<sup>68</sup>

Because of their association with peddling and their familial and economic ties to coreligionists in far-distant places, Jews came to be suspected of war profiteering. To be sure, some Jews did smuggle goods across the new border for profit—like Philip Whitlock, who had experience dodging the border police in Europe—but the public imagination greatly inflated their numbers.<sup>69</sup> In December 1862, in response to rampant speculation and smuggling in Union-occupied areas of the South, Union General Ulysses S. Grant issued his infamous General Order No. 11, which proclaimed, “The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade . . . are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order.” Grant’s order dictated that Jews be given passes and immediately ordered to leave the area under his command, which included all of Mississippi as well as large parts of western Tennessee and Kentucky. Jews throughout the Union appealed to President Abraham Lincoln, who soon revoked the order, asserting that he did not “like to hear a class or nationality condemned on account of a few sinners.”<sup>70</sup> Ultimately the individualist ethos that Jews seemed guilty of violating prevailed over the prospect of economic stability.

General Robert E. Lee had already come to a similar conclusion under very different circumstances a year earlier. Using the same terminology that Grant would use, Richmond rabbi Maximilian J. Michelbacher had



written a letter asking Lee to consider giving “a class of citizens being Israelites” a two-week furlough in order to travel to synagogues for the autumn high holidays. Lee responded to the bold request,

I cannot . . . grant the general furlough you desire but must leave to individuals to make their own application to other several commanders, in the hope that many will be able to enjoy the privilege you seek for them.<sup>71</sup>

Michelbacher and Grant, Jews and non-Jews were all trying to figure out how to deal with Jews’ distinctive practices amidst wartime conditions. If Jews’ north-south movement as a group could not be curtailed because of economic suspicions in the Union, then neither would the Confederacy enable their movement in the name of religious observance, especially if it disrupted military operations. American governments were unwilling to make Jewish mobility a matter of state interest, whether in the name of economic regulation or sacred time, whether in pursuit or violation of military security.

In wartime and in peacetime, Jews became involved in conversations about mobility and the fate of the expanding American nation. A politics of movement limited by race was further circumscribed on the local level by occupation and time, categories that were not always as neutral or objective as they initially seemed. This was especially clear in the case of Jews, whose economic ties and religious practices were just visible enough to raise the specter of racial difference. Ultimately, however, these flashpoints were the exceptions that proved the rule. U.S. officials would not purposely restrict Jews’ movement, but they would also offer no help in facilitating Jewish life. Jews would have to navigate the vagaries of mobility, as well as diverse local strategies for coping with them, as individuals.

Seven years before the Civil War, on the Fourth of July, 1854, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise acknowledged that while many had “experienced the pitiable lot of living as a Jew under the oppressive and exceptional laws of European masters,” now they were lucky to live in “this extensive country,” which he described as “the largest territory ever governed by one code of laws!”<sup>72</sup> In contrast to the German lands and other places where

Jewish citizenship was an open question, America's language of Manifest Destiny seemed to provide an opening for Jewish participation in the great projects of the nation. This image, reinforced by European Jewish press coverage of the United States, lured thousands of migrants across the Atlantic. News stories, emigrants' guidebooks, firsthand accounts, and historical and demographic information—in both Hebrew and German—emphasized the huge spaces and the far-flung travels of fellow Jews in the United States.<sup>73</sup>

Fueled by this hope and in search of economic opportunity, Jews quickly joined the movement to fill the seemingly empty West. By the Civil War, according to one estimation, Jews—both native and foreign-born—could be found in at least a thousand towns throughout the United States.<sup>74</sup> As Isaac Leeser wrote in 1843, “The country is fast filling up with Jews. . . . From the newly gotten Santa Fe to the confines of New Brunswick, and from the Atlantic to the shores of the western sea, the wandering sons of Israel are seeking homes and freedom.”<sup>75</sup> New York was the largest Jewish community in the nation, growing from 10,000 Jews in 1840 to 60,000 in 1877, but other cities like Cincinnati, San Francisco, St. Louis, and New Orleans also emerged as urban Jewish centers.<sup>76</sup>

Roaming peddlers and small-town storekeepers kept connections to these larger cities, visiting to procure new goods and commune with coreligionist family and friends. Jews traveled for settlement or business, health or leisure, duty or adventure, and found few restrictions or regulations.<sup>77</sup> In 1867, for instance, a friend wrote to Wise that his son had left Hartford, Connecticut, and was “on a scamper westward to Santa Fe.” He hoped that Wise would be able to stop him at Leavenworth, where all westward trains passed, knowing full well that there were no government authorities or passport checks to stand in the boy's way.<sup>78</sup> Upon emigration, Jewish movement was no longer legally monitored or predictably organized; it was unfettered although not without its difficulties. In the United States, especially, mobility was, in the words of theorist Timothy Cresswell, “both center and margin—the lifeblood of modernity and the virus that threaten[ed] to hasten its downfall.”<sup>79</sup> Jews were placed in the middle of these conflicting images, given unprecedented access to movement, but also pathologized in times of stress or when they allowed too much distinctiveness to show. This logic was far from that of the *Matrikel* or the *Heimatscheine*, but it set certain limits and it had real

costs. In the United States, migrants formed by policies of monitored mobility now moved through vast open spaces loaded with the possibilities of freedom and of chaos.

## Reminding Myself That I Am a Jew

### Voluntarism and Social Life

David Steinheimer, an immigrant from Ichenhausen, Bavaria, remembered of his first time peddling in Georgia in 1856, “After I was out a few miles in the Country I became homesick, for I was a stranger in a strange land,” like Abraham in the Bible. He continued, “I had a good crying spell, but I found that did not help any, so I proceeded on my journey.” The seventeen-year-old walked nine miles, stayed overnight with local farmers, and that night “had another spell of blues.” Despite the emotional and physical strain, Steinheimer continued working as a peddler, quickly learning the local customs and language. Over the next decade he worked in a store in Griffin, Georgia, passed the war years in Pittsburgh, and finally moved to Atlanta in 1866, where he married native daughter Isabella Mayer and had four children. He went into the dry goods business with his brothers and became a dedicated member of the Hebrew Benevolent Society and its successor congregation, the Temple.<sup>1</sup> Steinheimer’s path to success and stability was a familiar one among nineteenth-century Jews, but it was not as smooth as it might seem in this retelling. For him and for others, the shock of migration was only the first in a series of negotiations of home, place, self, and other as they moved throughout the United States.

In a few cases large groups of Jews migrated from a single community; for instance, the larger part of Ichenhausen in Swabia, and one hundred people from Meiningen in Prussian Saxony.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of migrants, however, were young single men who came to America in search of economic opportunity. Even as many migrants joined brothers or cousins in their new land, not all were so lucky, and in any event were often compelled to go off on their own, usually with no knowledge of English.<sup>3</sup> The nation’s growing market economy, along with its expansion into new territories, created the perpetual possibility—and in many cases the imperative—of relocation. Peddlers and merchants traveled regularly

as a part of their business, and many Jews relocated repeatedly in search of a better situation.<sup>4</sup> In the United States, they found, Jewish identity was not a bureaucratic category that could be used to limit occupation, landownership, movement, or residence. At the same time, there were no official Jewish communities to facilitate access to the necessities of Jewish worship, including a *minyan*, or quorum, of ten adult Jewish men.

Mobility beckoned with the promise of economic success, then, but it was also risky and lonely. Over time, Jews found companionship, trust, and religious fellowship with non-Jews and with coreligionists they found on the road through family, hometown ties, kosher boardinghouses, the Jewish press, and informal worship gatherings. They created benevolent, mutual aid, literary, and debate societies; lodges of nascent fraternal orders like the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith; and congregations that implemented particular reforms and *minhagim*, or rites. Most studies of American Judaism in this period focus on one of the above institutions, most often synagogues.<sup>5</sup> While these accounts offer helpful details, they obscure the breadth, diversity, instability, and unevenness of the religious worlds of nineteenth-century Americans, especially young men.

As Jews moved, they entered and exited places with a range of Jewish populations as well as levels and kinds of organization. Congregations coexisted with diverse societies and lodges that were also fundamentally intended to alleviate the identity crises of American life. Yet the mobility that inspired them also challenged their cohesion and consistency. In the end, congregations—and especially the category of membership—created as many problems and conflicts as they solved. This is rarely noted in studies of institutional religious life, but evidence of outsiders, conflicts, and misbehavior is abundant within their own minutes and reports. Congregational membership was far from a decisive measure of religious commitment, and the modes of worship and identity they announced were more confusing strategies than committed ideologies. Indeed, American religion looks very different if we begin not with congregations or sectarianism, but with the many lonely migrants seeking community, identity, and stability on the road.

## **Unfettered Mobility and the Search for Fellowship**

In 1839 Simon Gratz Moses, a member of a prominent Philadelphia Jewish family, was “determined on leaving [his current location in] Bordentown [New Jersey] and seeking some more flourishing location he has not determined where.” According to his sister Sarah, he planned to spend some time in Philadelphia and North Carolina “to seek a place of abode,” and “seem[ed] to have a fancy for Saint Louis which I expect he will visit.”<sup>6</sup> Moses did eventually move to Saint Louis, and when, in 1864, he decided to relocate again, to Savannah, he informed his wife after the fact, “this will be our future home.”<sup>7</sup> Moses could move at will, but his sister and wife, like most other women of the day, were limited to movement in the context of the family. This was especially challenging for immigrant women, who were less likely than their husbands or fathers to speak English, but it was not easy even for the native-born. When Simon’s cousin Miriam Gratz became engaged to Solomon Cohen in 1836, she had described it as a “promise to leave my home and all that I have held most dear.”<sup>8</sup>

Gender shaped movement, but so did technology, marital status, and class. Solomon Kahn, from Ingwiller, in French Alsace, relocated multiple times in the 1870s in pursuit of a profitable and pleasant place to run a dry goods store. He tried out Tuscola, Illinois; Selma, Alabama; and Pleasant Hill, Indiana, while spending time in between in Montgomery, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. Each place he left because “business with us is terribly dull.” Of Pleasant Hill, a small town without even a railroad stop, he wrote that he “did not relish the idea much to live in such a place . . . [but with] the hope and prospect which is good, to make money, I will try and be contented.” Soon after he got into financial trouble and contemplated heading off for Brazil or California.<sup>9</sup> Moses was a well-off family man and therefore selective and methodical about his moves, the first of which took place before widespread railroad development. Kahn was poor and single, moving urgently wherever there might be an opportunity in the years following the completion of the transcontinental railroad. Both men, however, were able to move with remarkably few restrictions.

In central and eastern Europe, such personal deliberation about where to live and how to earn money would have been impossible without consideration of government policies. In the expanding United States, however, Moses and Kahn were deemed white, and so they could move far and wide in pursuit of economic success, which for most meant rising

from humble peddlers to “proprietors of large establishments, . . . rich merchants, . . . [and] property holders.”<sup>10</sup> The young and the poor were more mobile, but the stability of shopkeepers who lived dispersed throughout the continent was also not guaranteed. Whether they were living in small towns, big cities, or traversing the roads in between, migrants found themselves close to precious few family members, coreligionists, or religious institutions. Everyday life was distinguished from European homelands and from the settled port cities of the East by a perpetual sense of impermanence and religious scarcity.

Upon arrival in a new place, and especially upon initial immigration, migrants found or sought out friends and relatives who had preceded them. In his first letter on American shores in 1839, David Mayer wrote to his family in Germany, “In short if I want to hunt up all of my acquaintances it would take me 4 weeks.”<sup>11</sup> When Abraham Kohn first arrived in New York, he “passed through Grand Street where, to my great joy, I met my old friend Friedmann.” He peddled with his brothers and acquaintances from Fürth, his hometown, each going in a different direction and agreeing to meet up in a month. “The joy of being together for a few days always costs money,” he wrote, “but we are so pleased to see each other again that it is very hard to leave.”<sup>12</sup> Jews sought companionship, sociability, and economic assistance among friends and relatives. They offered each other capital, credit, work, and recommendations, and those who knew English coordinated business for those who did not.<sup>13</sup> In 1871 William Mack advised a family member “to consult an honest, smart Business man among the Jehudim [Jews] of Chicago, he could tell you exactly how to act,” while Lazard Kahn wrote to a Mr. E. Blum with the hopes that he would help “in securing a good situation for my brother.”<sup>14</sup>

And yet, Kohn discovered, American life compelled striving young men to go off on their own without much support. He complained in the early 1840s,

I don't like to be alone. The Americans are funny people. Although they sit together by the dozen in taverns, they turn their backs to each other, and no one talks to anybody else. Is this supposed to be the custom of a republic? I don't like it.



The United States seemed to Kohn to be a “land of hypocrisy, guile, and fraud.”<sup>15</sup> To many in Europe as well, it was a dangerous social wilderness in which young Jews would become isolated or fall in with the wrong crowd. Shortly before he left for America, seventeen-year-old Solomon Roth’s father urged him to be wary of his associations, to avoid prostitutes, gamblers, “drunkards and merrymakers, . . . the man of invectives, the calumniator, and the hypocrite,” and especially strangers. At the same time, Roth’s father urged him, “Never say in the manner of the cold Englishman or American: ‘Help your own self!’”<sup>16</sup> It was left up to Roth to determine who was worthy of such assistance.

This conflicting advice points to the simultaneous uncertainty and necessity of social relations Jews feared in the United States. Even with fluent English and proper comportment, it could be hard to meet people and even harder to discern their true intentions and character. A convicted forger once befriended Charleston native Raphael Moses on the road and cheated him out of some money. He took from that experience “not to get too intimate with traveling acquaintances and I have given travelers a wide berth ever since.”<sup>17</sup> But even if it was impossible to know whom to trust, it was impossible to get by without some help. Aryah Segal wrote to Isaac Leiser in 1849 that his son was having trouble finding work in part because he was “very diffident and rather slow about forming friendships with people.”<sup>18</sup> When Solomon Kahn’s business fell apart in the 1870s, he placed the blame on insufficient individualism. He had found his partner to be an unreliable liar, and expressed his “firm intentions to go to some country, where I am by myself, where less sympathy is needed.”<sup>19</sup>

For Jews, antebellum America was, as historians have argued, both an “incipient economic chance world” and a “world of strangers,” but it was also “awash in a sea of [Christian] faith.”<sup>20</sup> A common trope in memoirs of the period is the surprise encounter of a Christian farmer with a Jew. Writing about a family who hosted him on his very first peddling trip, David Steinheimer remembered, “When I told them I was a Jew, they were astonished—they thought a Jew had horns.”<sup>21</sup> Mobile Jews like Steinheimer might be accepted on the road because their difference was not immediately visible, but this could change once they had settled down. Haiman Spitz, from Posen, recalled that customers in Maine usually asked what church a merchant belonged to. “It was a poor chance for me, being an Israelite,” he remembered, and “I found out I would have to become

acquainted [with non-Jews] in order to make a living.” Spitz was able to acclimate, he remembered later, because of his American-born wife and because, “being a Mason, I visited lodges; joined the Odd Fellows and other societies, and became a citizen of the United States.”<sup>22</sup> Civic and political participation was a social pleantry, but it was also an economic necessity.

Many far-flung Jews made Christian friends and joined fraternal orders and other non-Jewish voluntary associations that proliferated as citizens of all stripes sought connection and stability, whether on geographical, political, religious, or gendered grounds.<sup>23</sup> For married men like Spitz, fraternal orders in particular offered a space separate from both the insecurity of the market and the feminized domestic sphere, and for younger men it eased the transition from boyhood to manhood.<sup>24</sup> Some Jews even took up church attendance as a respectable and enjoyable way to pass a Sunday and to socialize with their non-Jewish neighbors. In many small communities Jews were entirely integrated, such as in Wilmington, North Carolina, of which native-born Rachel Lazarus wrote in 1828, “Ours is the only family of Israelites in the town . . . [and the children’s] early attachments + intimacies are all . . . among Christians.”<sup>25</sup>

Joining a non-Jewish fraternal lodge, attending church, and making Christian friends did not preclude Jewish associations, however, and many Jews still sought the companionship and trust of coreligionists over and above existing ties of family and hometown. It helped that where other Americans could only see white immigrants, Jews were often able to identify Jewish bodies, names, languages, practices, and stories. William Frank met his future brother-in-law when he sat next to him on a train “no doubt, observing that I was a follower of Abraham.”<sup>26</sup> Marcus Spiegel, who rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel before dying in the Civil War, identified fellow Jews during his service “by the name as well as ponim [face],” although he still managed to surprise them by speaking in Hebrew or wishing them a “Happy Sabbath” on a Saturday. Spiegel wrote to his wife, “I have had lots of fun since I am in the Service and Especially in Virginia with Yehudim [Jews].” Not only did they delight in meeting him, they also invited him to dinner and offered him free board.<sup>27</sup>

In wartime and in peacetime, once mobile Jews had recognized one another, they worked to create ties that were more consistent and stable,

the result of careful planning rather than total serendipity alone. For instance, Jews chose to live together in boardinghouses, a practice that, according to San Franciscan C. H. Meyer in 1852, “gives me the opportunity of reminding myself that I am a ‘Jew.’”<sup>28</sup> General boardinghouses were notorious for their scandalous clientele, and so boarding with fellow Jews seemed to offer better prospects for suitable companionship. Furthermore, many boardinghouses were overseen by Jewish women. Just as ministers’ wives and prostitutes became sought-after confidants in many frontier communities, Jewish women like Mrs. Weill of New York, Mrs. A. Warshauer and Madame A. Michael of San Francisco, and Mrs. Caroline Spiegel of Akron offered female oversight as well as housing and food, approximating something like a Jewish home.<sup>29</sup>

Jews forged connections across space through the Jewish press, especially Isaac Leiser’s *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, founded in Philadelphia in 1843, and Isaac Mayer Wise’s *Israelite*, founded in 1854 in Cincinnati.<sup>30</sup> Many Jews first found these newspapers through word of mouth or as a slim bundle of paper passed along from one reader to another. S. M. Mayer from Marysville, California, wrote in 1853, “I have just found in one of my friend’s houses one of your little books called *Occident* . . . he is not a subscriber he brought it with him from New Orleans.”<sup>31</sup> Among other features, these newspapers included “wanted” ads that allowed Jews to find employment relationships with one another.<sup>32</sup> Subscribers gleaned useful information about where to find work, boardinghouses, societies, and congregations, but also relished more general news about their coreligionists, finding fellow Jews in the pages of newspapers if nowhere else.

The loneliness and isolation that Jews felt were not only individual economic and psychological ailments; they also posed serious challenges to Jewish religious practice, especially for men. Traditionally, Jewish manhood involved learning, ritual observance, and prayer in the company of nine other men. It afforded privileges of inclusion, leadership, and ritual expertise that were denied to women and was centered on homosocial interactions that were difficult to enact on the road and in small towns. Aaron Haas remembered of his father’s life in Newnan, Georgia, that “he was not satisfied to be cut off all his life from Jewish surroundings and the means of living as a Jew,” and so eventually he moved to Atlanta.<sup>33</sup> In 1876 a “man named Yaikof” wrote that his town of

Bristol, Tennessee, was “a poor place to bensch Messumen [invoke the prayers after the meal with a quorum]” because it had “an insufficient number of Yehudim [Jews] (I believe three is the requisite number) to perform the ceremony.”<sup>34</sup> Without access to fellow Jewish men—and indeed the United States only reached a density of ten people per square mile in 1860—worship was for many an individual, private, or neglected exercise.<sup>35</sup>

Sabbath observance was likewise a hardship, especially for mobile young men. Constantly working and often far from congregations, many neglected the Sabbath or found alternative ways of marking the day. While his Union army service made it nearly impossible to worship on the Sabbath, for instance, in Memphis in December 1862, Marcus Spiegel happened upon some fellow Jews on a Saturday and followed them back to a Jewish boardinghouse for a kosher Sabbath lunch. Two years later, in Baton Rouge, he was “invited to a regular Shabbath [Sabbath] Dinner at Mrs. Baer, a Jewish Widow here.”<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Baer and other women who had been moved to far-flung places were excluded from most religious practices, and yet they too sought camaraderie by hosting Sabbath meals, at the same time fulfilling female obligations of lighting Sabbath candles and making *challah* bread.<sup>37</sup>

Jews were more likely to observe the autumnal high holidays and to a lesser extent the major pilgrim holidays of Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. A. Rosenheim arrived in Nevada City, California, in 1850 and found a mining village with only five or six Jews. After two years, he reported,

There are no less than 30 Jews here the most of whom are willing to close their stores and suspend business on our great holidays as was shown on last Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur.<sup>38</sup>

The Kahn brothers, scattered and moving through Alabama and the Midwest, rarely mentioned synagogue in their letters, but they did note major festivals. Felix wrote to Lazard in 1871, “Your letter from 7th reached me in hand just an hour before the late feast of Pesach [Passover] and that is the reason that I answered it only now,” indicating that he ceased writing in observance of the holiday laws, was preoccupied with

holiday celebrations, or both.<sup>39</sup> In 1871 Solomon wrote to Lazard from Montgomery, “The first days of Succoth are passed well.” He reported that during the holiday he had “visit[ed] two or three houses.”<sup>40</sup>

Worship required not only a prayer quorum, but also requisite skills and spaces. In the absence of Jewish infrastructure, small communities engaged knowledgeable local men to lead services, read Torah, and serve, more generally, as *hazanim* (cantors). A. Rosenheim reported that in Nevada City, a Mr. Lee of New York served, “but of course there were others who took their respective parts and conducted themselves with credit.”<sup>41</sup> Worship was most commonly held in homes or rented quarters. In Quincy, Illinois, for instance, there was “a room in the house of Mr. Herman, containing a scroll of the law, fitted up for the purpose of divine service.”<sup>42</sup> As Jews traversed the American continent, whether as soldiers in wartime or peddlers in pursuit of economic success, they both reveled in and felt the real constraints of American life. Movement fostered loneliness, economic mistrust, and religious isolation, which Jews overcame by making friends of their neighbors, but also of coreligionists they managed to find. Religious life was not abandoned, but enacted through multiple channels of family and hometown, boardinghouses and newspapers, festivity and worship. Jews found one another in the hopes of reestablishing the community and identity that mobility so easily disrupted.

### **Institutionalizing Jews**

Stumbling upon coreligionists—even in boardinghouses or worship—was an uncertain business, however, and Jews who had settled down increasingly created a range of Jewish voluntary associations where they could more reliably and regularly locate one another. While individual Jews were invisible in the United States, these institutions were officially Jewish by virtue of the corporate charters granted to them by American states. Through incorporation, a relatively new legal technology, they were granted tax exemptions as well as “the ability to hold property and capital, to enter into courts, and to outlive individual members.”<sup>43</sup> Jewish bodies could thus be made into visible forms of social life that offered public recognition and some promise of stability.

Jews most directly sought to protect themselves from the vagaries of mobility through mutual aid societies, which offered insurance and support in case of illness or death, and through literary, debate, and benevolent societies. Charity in particular was intended to “assist poor traveling Israelites” and “such unfortunate Jews as might be sojourning with us.”<sup>44</sup> Specific causes—like yellow fever relief—might be supported through individual subscriptions and championed in the Jewish press, but a more general benevolence was advanced through local societies.<sup>45</sup> These were overseen by men, but also provided an acceptable venue for the organization of Jewish women, whose sphere, Isaac Leeser argued, was “not the highway, not the public streets.”<sup>46</sup> Organizations like Ahavas Achos (1853) of New Haven, Connecticut, the Hebrew Ladies Aid Association (1865) of Natchez, Mississippi, and the Jewish Ladies Aid Society (1874) of Columbus, Georgia, offered women camaraderie and purpose through fundraising, especially charitable balls, to benefit orphan asylums, local synagogues, and other causes.<sup>47</sup> All of these efforts were outlets for consolidating Jewish identity through “the promotion of our sacred cause, for the benefit of ourselves and mankind at large,” as it was put by one small-town Young Men’s Hebrew Literary Association.<sup>48</sup>

These goals and methods were combined in the most successful—and most distinctively American—Jewish organizations of this era, fraternal lodges, especially those of the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith. Founded in New York in 1843, the IOBB quickly spread throughout the country and was joined by several other Jewish orders and women’s auxiliaries. Jewish men in a small town could establish a lodge by calling a meeting, applying to a district grand lodge for an official charter, and procuring meeting space. In Columbus, Georgia, twenty-five to thirty men came to the first B’nai B’rith meeting in 1866. Members visited sick brothers and organized a masquerade ball for the holiday of Purim, and at one point “proposed to introduce Debates upon religious, moral and literary subjects.”<sup>49</sup> The structure of the order was well suited to mobile Jews, who could find lodges in far-flung places. For instance, Lazard Kahn had a certificate stating that he was a brother of the third degree of Selma, Alabama’s B’nai B’rith Zadok Lodge, which included spaces to fill out at other lodges he visited, almost like a passport.<sup>50</sup>

In some places, like Chattanooga, Tennessee, in the early 1870s, the lodge was the only Jewish institution, and while there were Jews who were



content with lodges or societies as means of affiliation, many felt the need for more formalized worship and ritual practice.<sup>51</sup> A Jew from Mobile, Alabama, described this impulse to organize in 1844:

For some years past, in common with many others, I have felt a very great solicitude in this matter, believing it our bounden duty whenever in our wayward wanderings we should chance to mingle in one spot in sufficient numbers, there to offer our worship in those ancient forms that evidence so clearly our great descent.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond encouraging worship, as this Jew intended, congregations were intended to create permanent and public centers where Jews could reliably find the human and material resources of Jewish life. In the early years, however, many congregations remained very informal, consisting of barely more than occasional services. While the next two chapters will explore the role of congregations in facilitating family life and procuring material objects, here it is important that congregations like Detroit's Temple Beth El, founded in 1852, described their goals as "forming a Society to provide themselves a place of public worship."<sup>53</sup>

Congregations were usually founded once there was a critical mass of local Jews who were geographically and financially stable. On Sunday, October 30, 1859, for instance, an "informal meeting of several Israelites of the city of Macon, Ga. was held at the house of E. Brown Esq . . . to form if possible a congregation."<sup>54</sup> Of the nine founders (of twelve) who can be readily found in the 1860 census, the oldest was fifty-seven years old and the youngest was twenty-seven, still considerably older than most new migrants. All were merchants long resident in the United States, mostly married with children and in possession of more than \$5,000 in personal estate, a considerable sum.<sup>55</sup> Their first task was to hire a permanent *hazan* in order to oversee services, kosher meat, circumcisions, and other functions of Jewish life. They offered a low-paying, one-year contract and went through repeated struggles to find an appropriate man, often going through long stretches without an official minister. Even as late as 1867 a Mr. Cahn of Montezuma was "tender[ed] a note of thanks" and ten dollars for "his kind offer to serve during the holidays." Early on



they rented a fifty-by-twenty-eight-foot room over a local confectionary for one hundred dollars per year and prepared “to fit up the room complete as a synagogue.” This included whitewashing the walls and installing gas chandeliers and pipes for an additional \$210.<sup>56</sup> By January 1860 they were ready to consecrate the new worship space and had notified the editor of New York’s *Jewish Messenger* newspaper.<sup>57</sup>

The progression from assemblage of local Jews to formal congregation occurred in towns throughout the country, where coreligionists sought to gather resources and routinize Jewish life.<sup>58</sup> Their success was not inevitable, however, and congregations struggled to survive the poverty and the mobility of their constituencies. In Newark, New Jersey, in 1854, there were around two hundred Jewish families, but only sixty members of the congregation because many had “limited means to assist in bearing the necessary expenses.”<sup>59</sup> Leiser wrote from Sandusky, Ohio, in 1857 that there were about fifteen Jewish families, yet “the uncertainty as regards the continuance of our people in the places where they settle, causes here, too, that nothing is done.”<sup>60</sup> Four years later the *Jewish Messenger* reported that Sandusky’s congregation “has been dissolved, the greater part of the members having left Sandusky, and taken up their abode further west.”<sup>61</sup> And yet, more and more congregations were founded and managed to persist. In 1840 there were 18 formal Jewish congregations in the United States, in 1850 there were at least 76, and by 1877 there were no less than 277.<sup>62</sup>

In many of these congregations, however, volunteer service leaders and rented quarters remained the norm. In Iowa City in 1859, of the six families and “good number of bachelors” who belonged to the new congregation, a Mr. Fleishman “was selected to act as *Hazan*, because this was his vocation in Germany and because he closely observed the Sabbath.”<sup>63</sup> Three years later, according to a local report, the volunteer *hazan*, likely the same Fleishman, had declared himself a rabbi. Although he had taken to hunting and riding on Saturdays, in violation of the Sabbath, he was refusing to lead high holiday services because he deemed the congregation “not holy and religious enough for him.” Without his skills, the congregation had once “conducted the services to the best of our ability,” and once “disperse[d] without service.”<sup>64</sup> With this kind of irregularity and confusion, congregations flooded Jewish newspapers with advertisements for *hazanim* who could facilitate regular religious life.

Congregational leaders were also eager to acquire or construct their own buildings, which would be easily identifiable to strangers and readily able to accommodate them. “Esox,” a member of the congregation in Burlington, Iowa, which had twenty members and a hired *hazan*, reported in 1875, “We have not yet a building of our own, but neither are we hidden in an out-of-the-way place.” The congregation occupied two upper stories of “a fine brick building” on Main Street, a central location that was significant both symbolically and practically.<sup>65</sup> Aesthetics and location mattered to these congregations, but so did size. In Mobile, Alabama, in 1850, local Jews complained that the “temporary rooms” they used could fit only sixty men and thirty-six women, which left “no room for children, none for those who have not secured a seat” by renting a regular pew, and “none for strange Israelites, of whom there are many in Alabama.”<sup>66</sup> Congregations not only planned for local members, but also intended their synagogues to house mobile visitors.

Other congregations experienced similar frustrations, and between 1850 and 1860, the value of synagogue property recorded in the U.S. census of religious bodies grew from just under half a million dollars to just over one million dollars. Congregations built new buildings—for instance the 1851 Gothic structure of New York’s B’nai Jeshurun, which cost \$50,000—while others modified church buildings, as in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where Achdut ve’Shalom spent \$1,200 to remodel a German Methodist church. They sought and received donations from local Christians and from Jews elsewhere to pay for the expense of building and maintaining synagogues. Congregations competed for architectural grandeur and interior refinement, with women often supplying decorative wreaths, garlands, and ark covers.<sup>67</sup>

When congregations dedicated new synagogue buildings, they sometimes created time capsules, dramatizing their permanence by placing in the cornerstone various mementos, including publications, the constitutions of Jewish organizations, money, and other objects—for instance, a Hebrew almanac and a likeness of British Jewish notable Sir Moses Montefiore.<sup>68</sup> They celebrated their visibility and entrance into the local religious firmament in consecration ceremonies, important communal events featuring processions, special sermons by visiting rabbis, and performances of Jewish religious life for local Jews and non-Jews alike.<sup>69</sup> Providing a public Judaism was certainly one force behind the

creation of Jewish congregations. Of all America's voluntary associations, none were as common or exalted as Protestant congregations, marked by tidy churches and ordained ministers. Seeking donations to build a synagogue in postwar Shreveport, E. Ebenstadt insisted that "every sect of religion has its place of worship, but we have 'none.'"<sup>70</sup> But the creation of congregations, the hiring of *hazanim*, and the building of synagogues were fueled by more practical motivations; namely, migrants wanted to bring together the financial, communal, and material resources of religious life in an accessible location.

In the absence of official Jewish institutions, some Jews, like Baden native William Flegenheimer, became avid organizers. Between his immigration in 1851, at age nineteen, and his fortieth birthday, he not only rose from itinerant peddler to Richmond lawyer, but became a Mason and helped found three Jewish associations: the Young Men's Hebrew Literary Association of Baltimore; Richmond's congregation Beth Israel, about which he wrote several letters to the *Israelite*; and the local lodge of the Independent Order of Free Sons of Israel.<sup>71</sup> In an anonymous land, Jews like Flegenheimer created and patronized new venues in which they could make friends; find economic support and business connections; offer Jewish obligations of charity and prayer; pursue public recognition; and, above all, foster a stable identity. They would find, however, that not all of their coreligionists were as able—or as eager—to affiliate.

### **Membership, Voluntarism, and the Politics of Belonging**

Though Jewish organizations were state-recognized legal bodies, they did not have the governmental oversight or built-in constituency of a German *Gemeinde* or a French consistory. Instead, American congregations—like societies and fraternal orders—relied on voluntary membership, presumed to consist of sovereign individuals who shared beliefs, commitments, and financial support. In practice, however, the actual contours of membership and belonging were complicated by the stresses of mobility. Jews found that the concept of voluntary membership could coincide with Jewish forms of trust, belonging, and obligation, but it could also hurt or confuse them. American Judaism consisted not only of diligent synagogue

members and apathetic strangers, but also diverse Jews engaging in different ways with this new model of Jewish identity.

Most societies restricted membership to men, often men over eighteen or twenty-one, and imposed further limits, such as those based on tenure of residence. In 1861 membership in San Francisco's Chebra Berith Shalom, a mutual aid society, was limited to those who had "attained the age of twenty-one and not exceeded the age of forty-five, of Mosaic Belief, corporally and mentally well and of good moral character, and if married, wedded after Mosaic Ritus."<sup>72</sup> Over and above these qualifications, the identity and respectability of a given candidate for membership had to be verified through a bureaucratic process involving paperwork, election, and in the case of fraternal orders, formal initiation. This was also true in congregations. At Macon, membership was restricted to those men over twenty-one who had been reliable seat-holders for two years, were elected by the majority of members, and paid a fifteen-dollar application fee within the month, although membership dues varied based on personal status. In the first few months of the congregation, there were twenty-seven members, fourteen of whom were married men with their own businesses, eight of whom were struggling married men or successful single men, and just five of whom were single day laborers or clerks.<sup>73</sup>

According to the 1841 constitution of Saint Louis's United Hebrew Congregation, "Any person may become a contributor to this congregation," while a congregator was "any male Hebrew by paying into the hands of the proper officers for that purpose elected the sum per month specified in the by-laws." A member was someone who had "resided at least one year either in this State or the State of Illinois, and is known to be a man of good and moral character" and who had been elected by other members.<sup>74</sup> Throughout the country, congregational women were central to fundraising, and they attended worship in larger numbers than did men. In small towns like Oil City, Pennsylvania, it was reported, "Regular divine worship, Sabbath after Sabbath, has been established only about six months ago . . . mainly by the influence of the good ladies residing there."<sup>75</sup> However, women could not be members or serve on boards, and they often were seated in cramped balconies. They were granted access to seats, education for their children, and burial plots through their husbands or fathers; only widows sometimes enjoyed their own congregational status.<sup>76</sup> As if to make up for their structural inequality, Jewish men

exuberantly praised women in the press for their dedication and service. Many echoed the words of Isaac Mayer Wise in 1877: “[the] ladies uphold Judaism.”<sup>77</sup>

Congregations required male members, although they worked to exclude unseemly or unreliable individuals, including those with questionable religious behavior. In the congregation at Easton, Pennsylvania, in the early 1840s, there were constitutional provisions for a kind of tribunal to discipline members who “transgress the laws of the Congregation in any way whatsoever.”<sup>78</sup> Some congregations levied fines on members who failed to appear for congregational duties or honors—for instance, a prayer quorum for a mourning service (*shiva minyan*)—and included strict rules regarding decorum during services. Congregants were expected to contribute through dues as well as through measures like “the renting of seats, free offerings, donation and the sale of . . . religious honors in the synagogue.”<sup>79</sup> However, individual Jews were unaccustomed to paying out of pocket for religious life and had become comfortable with increasingly individuated religious practice on the road. Congregations, especially those that were the only one in a town, both felt a sense of obligation to other Jews and needed any funds or bodies they could get. Despite the many elaborate rules and regulations, congregations and individuals regularly violated them.

There was a tool of excommunication, or *herem*, in Jewish communities, but for the most part, in a mobile country with little religious authority and few resources, there was no way to enforce *herem*, and little motivation.<sup>80</sup> Take the case of Mr. Sloman, of Indianapolis. In 1859 he was almost expelled from the local congregation after drunkenly threatening other members with a hatchet, an incident that began when he lent chairs to the congregation during the opening service of Yom Kippur—Kol Nidre—which was packed with strangers. After undertaking a comprehensive trial, replete with eyewitness accounts, the congregation decided,

On [account] of him being first our fellow-citizen, sec[ond]  
our Brother in creed and when taking in consideration the  
feeling of his wife, we the members of the Com[mittee]

recommend the said Sloman to the Indulgence of the Congregation.

For this congregation, a Jew was ultimately a brother-in-creed, a fellow American citizen, and the husband of an upstanding Jewish woman, which compelled them to retain Sloman as a member despite his violent outburst. He was expected to apologize, but even if he did not, they threatened only a three-month suspension.<sup>81</sup>

Such confusion and ultimate laxity extended to matters more directly related to Jewish law as well. Increasing numbers of Jewish men were marrying non-Jewish women, but they still wanted to remain within Jewish communities. In 1858 St. Paul's Mount Zion Temple resolved "to write some learned man in relation to the rights of membership of Israelites that are married to non Jews." They received two responses, one from orthodox rabbi Morris Raphall of New York, who declared that "no cong[regation] shall receive as a member or admit to the [Torah scroll] . . . a man who is married to a non-Israelite." The other response, from Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, stated that "our codes contain no law providing to exclude one from [community] or forbid him to be called to the [Torah scroll] on account of his marriage connection."<sup>82</sup> Given two radically opposed rabbinic decisions, the Jews of Saint Paul were back to square one, although it seems likely that they chose to follow the latter, more inclusive opinion, which would provide them with access to the dues and human resources of the intermarried Jew in question.

The proper comportment of members included not only moral behavior but the payment of dues, in which Jews were notoriously haphazard, whether because of skepticism, apathy, or relocation. While sometimes nonpayment could lead to revocation of membership, more common were unenforced threats and repeated complaints that "members avail themselves of the lightest excuse when your secretary comes round to make collections."<sup>83</sup> Congregational coffers fluctuated and suffered considerably when wealthy and committed members left. *Hazan* Henry Loewenthal complained in 1859 that his congregation was about to "lose several members who were the *chief payers* (there are several who tho' subscribed yet decline payment) on account of their departure from here."<sup>84</sup> Some congregations allowed that if a member resigned "on account of



removing his residence from the city,” he could reapply with a discounted or free application fee if he ever returned, but congregational membership ultimately did not travel well.<sup>85</sup>

Jews who refused to become members in the first place expected and could usually rely on congregational services, although careful policies were developed governing their mourning and seating rights, and in some cases a ticket system was instituted for the overcrowded high holidays.<sup>86</sup> In Macon’s Beth Israel congregation a number of free seats were kept open for visitors and the poor, and support was allotted for “distressed Israelites.”<sup>87</sup> In 1847 representatives of the congregation in Mobile, Alabama, wrote somewhat awkwardly to the family of Isaac Moses, whose body they had recently buried in the Jewish cemetery despite the fact that he “had omitted in his life time to claim a participation in our undertaking.” They had a rule in place “interdicting the burial of any Israelite not a member except on the payment of such amount” as the board deemed appropriate. They did not ask for money outright, but did hint that “influenced by feelings which we hope will be appreciated, we waived the rigid formality of our laws.”<sup>88</sup> The boundary between poor coreligionist and delinquent free rider was uncertain in an institution that relied on voluntary funds, but also felt an obligation to downtrodden coreligionists and needed to make a *minyan*.

While mobile Jews who did not offer financial support were welcomed, resident nonmembers were a more fundamental problem. The board of Congregation B’nai Israel of Natchez insisted in 1874 that “this congregation has always dealt in a spirit of fellowship toward all Israelites [including] non-members residing in + about the limits of this city.” But, they concluded, obviously exasperated but reluctant to limit Jewish identity to membership, “all non-members permanently residing here are requested to contribute to our means.”<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, Jews who paid their membership dues did not always prove fastidious participants. In New Orleans in 1851, in the words of Judah Touro, there was “much lukewarmness. . . . The members of the congregation here as a general thing do not do any of their duties in supporting it either with their presence or other means.”<sup>90</sup> Hazan Henry Loewenthal reported from Macon, Georgia, that the congregation “must wait an hour at least for a [*minyan*] is obtained.”<sup>91</sup> In New York, congregations paid men to contribute to a *minyan*, while in other places there were so few men that ten women,



who were not included as members, were counted. This was the case in 1875 in Keokuk, Iowa, where the men were reluctant to lose a business day, and the women, faced with a newfound status, “felt well pleased.”<sup>92</sup>

Other Jewish institutions also faced these problems of wavering commitment and support, inclusion and exclusion. B’nai B’rith lodges struggled with how to “induce now rather indifferent members to a more frequent attendance” and vacillated between denying membership to intermarried men and arguing that the order should be open to all, including non-Jews.<sup>93</sup> If associations faced social problems not unlike those of congregations, newspapers shared their financial woes. Some subscribers wanted only “to try it for a few months and then if the newspaper attracts them they will continue to read it.”<sup>94</sup> At least one pair of men sent three dollars for an *Occident* subscription, “having no other money but such as we send you here enclosed, therefore we hope it will be acceptable.”<sup>95</sup> Newspapers also struggled to keep up with the mobility of their subscribers. A typical agent report, from the Reverend B. H. Gotthelf, of Louisville, listed men whose subscriptions could not be collected because they had moved or were out of town:

David Dinkelspiel [has gone] to California, N. Stern to Ohio, L. Silverman to Indiana. I still have to deliver to the following: M. Godshaw, who is now in New York on a buying trip. H. A. Kohn, in New Albany, and D. Sachs, who denies from beginning to end that he ever subscribed. . . . Many, like Liebton, Sol Hart, Bach, Gudshaw, Ullman, etc., are not even here.<sup>96</sup>

Despite these struggles, newspapers could cancel subscriptions and fraternal societies could suspend affiliations because they had no pretenses to total Jewish inclusivity. They consisted of Jewish men and women who shared a specific interest, loyalty, or aspiration and who offered financial contributions toward a specific economic, charitable, or cultural end. For the functioning of these voluntary organizations, dues payment was more important than Jewish legal status or stability, and the stakes of exclusion were relatively low.

In congregations, however, where worship occurred, there was a sense of obligation to all Jews, even though there was usually little overlap or even balance between paying members, active participants, and those who felt entitled to periodic benefits. They required dues-paying, service-attending Jews, and though many exceptions were made, it was largely for eager misbehavers and those deemed the worthy poor. Those in the middle—the entitled but unaffiliated—were cast as a problem, lazy, indifferent, communally destructive, but nonetheless within the bounds of belonging. In the United States, Jewish affiliation became a question for the first time. Membership was alluring as a path to stability and reliability, but it was not as supple or mobile as Jewish identity, as indicated by the hoards of “strangers” who appeared in American synagogues every Yom Kippur. As they traveled and settled throughout the United States, many Jews refused to belong, preferred particular institutions over others, or tried to belong in ways that frustrated the very premises of voluntarism.

### **Worship, Diversity, and Translocal Identities**

Congregational cohesion was further frayed by conflicting worship preferences, particularly debates over plans of reform and *minhagim*, geographically distinct rites that governed customs of pronunciation, prayer, and practice. Without authoritative rabbis or *minhagim* linked to a set locality, American Jewish communities had to negotiate the nature and scope of their identities and practices anew.<sup>97</sup> While ethnic differentiation occurred in other organizational forms—for instance, there were German Hebrew Benevolent Societies—it occurred most often within religious congregations. Many considered “Jewish” alone to be too broad a category for congregational life and bristled at contributing to worship styles they did not know or like.

The lowest common denominator of religious identification made sense according to Jewish law, the logistics of religious life, and within an American society that wanted to classify Judaism as one among other denominations. It was less helpful, however, in determining the actual machinations of worship and practice. Typical was the new congregation in Memphis in 1855:

Its members are newly assembled here from distant quarters of the world and various sections of the Union. It is natural to infer that different forms have been taught, different habits acquired, different modes of opinion on minor points inculcated.<sup>98</sup>

Philip Whitlock remembered that upon arriving in Richmond, he found the Portuguese synagogue “very strange and novel to me for that was the first time that I knew that there were such Jewish ritual which I hardly understood.” While Whitlock came to prefer it to the Polish ritual he grew up with, many others remained attached to the particular rites of their countries of origin.<sup>99</sup> Amidst diverse Jewish communities and with no real authority to turn to, Jews sought to align themselves within larger, more stable patterns of Jewish expression.

Many Jews sought to replicate the Jewish worship they had known in their youths. Saint Louis’s United Hebrew Congregation followed the Polish *minhag* and declared that this preference “shall never be altered or amended under any pretense whatsoever.”<sup>100</sup> Congregations also distinguished between openness to modernizing reforms and a more traditional orientation, although the exact nature of that distinction was unclear and shifting. Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life Congregation declared itself “orthodox,” but then further distinguished between Polish and Ashkenazi *minhagim*, taking a vote in which the Polish triumphed.<sup>101</sup> Although Congregation Ohabei Shalom of San Francisco stipulated in 1864 “that the Torah [portion] be read entire[ly] every Sabbath [*sic*] the same as in all orthodox congregations,” they also voted for mixed seating, a considerable change in worship experience.<sup>102</sup>

Communities conducted meetings and wrote minutes in German and insisted that the service “shall always be read in the original Hebrew,” although they often allowed lectures to “be given in English or German.”<sup>103</sup> Despite the persistence of German in many communities, English became increasingly common both in institutional life and in prayer services. Early on, Leeser insisted that German should be abandoned as the language of Jewish instruction, because “in a country like this, where the intercourse between distant parts is so rapid and general, it is idle to presume that the greatest watching can preserve a language different from

that spoken by the majority.”<sup>104</sup> Whereas in places like Bavaria, rabbis were required to speak German and the people themselves spoke many different dialects, in the United States there were no linguistic requirements for clergy, and English served as a helpful bridge among multilingual immigrants.<sup>105</sup>

Even as some maintained deep-rooted connections to European languages and forms of worship, then, growing numbers of Jewish congregations tried to orient themselves in relationship to others in the United States. Detroit’s Beth El, organized in 1850, insisted in its 1856 German-language constitution that they “shall attempt to remain in unity with the majority of the American congregations.”<sup>106</sup> At Portland’s congregation in 1868 a proposal was made, although eventually shelved, to use the same prayer book as San Francisco’s Emanu El, and small-town Jews modeled their congregational constitutions on those from larger cities.<sup>107</sup> This bid to moderate congregational diversity was epitomized by Isaac Mayer Wise’s platform of “minhag America.” His prayer book of that name, published in 1856, aimed to create a unified form of worship and offered English or German translations alongside the Hebrew.<sup>108</sup> In 1873 a Jew writing from Davenport, Iowa, endorsed the book as a compromise measure that brought peace to his congregation: “There is no dispute any longer how to model the service—what there was said in this or that country.”<sup>109</sup> Increasingly, such compromise led to an emphasis on decorum, replacing the cacophony of traditional worship with what Wise described as his ideal: “The minister facing the congregation reads the prayers in a solemn tone without any sort of song.”<sup>110</sup>

While Wise and others hoped that such measures would help congregations make decisions and ease movement among them, diversity persisted. Ritual, linguistic, and ideological orientations varied widely among congregations in the same place and even within individual congregations. Visiting Cincinnati on Yom Kippur of 1861, the traveler I. J. Benjamin wrote, “On being in the different lands mentioned before I always saw but one form of worship in every country; but here I saw all the different forms represented.” He elaborated,

The first day of New Year and eve of Kippur I was in your synagogue, and hearing no piutim [liturgical poems] I

thought I was in Asia, for there also they say no piut, although they call you reformers and there they never knew otherwise. . . . The second day of new year and Kippur-morning I was in the Broadway synagogue; there they said all the piutim and *selichoth* [penitential prayers]. . . . On coming in this synagogue I thought to be in Germany. At noon I went to the Polish synagogue, . . . then I went into the orthodox synagogue on Lodge street, where they pray like Polish hasidim without any sort of chant, merely reading in a plain style.

He noted that even in Wise's congregation, worship differed by service. Upon returning for a second service, he "was astonished to hear the gentlemen recite a large number of *selichoth*, I thought you are reform in the evening and orthodox in the afternoon," a move toward pragmatism intended to accommodate as many Jews as possible during the high holidays.<sup>111</sup>

Often these forms of compromise were experienced as inconsistency and uncertainty. In Portland, Oregon's Temple Beth Israel, in 1873, the twenty-four-year-old *hazan* Moses May complained, "I stand in the midst of chaos of forms and it is very difficult to discern whither to go." He advised the congregation "either to adopt Minhag America [or] . . . let us at least have Minhag Ashkenas." Either way, "I would beg the worthy cong[regation] to give me a plan of the alterations you have made and how you want your service conducted in the future even if you don't desire any other minhag than minhag Portland." For his part, the congregational president described the *minhag* as "neither Ashkenas nor America but the best name I can give it is a Fancy Minhag formed in Portland, Oregon."<sup>112</sup> Congregations were neither stable in their organization nor coherent in their Jewish identity or practice.

As debates went on within and among various congregations about worship, language, and rite, extra-congregational Jewish societies continued to proliferate. Indeed, American Jews belonged—and sort of belonged, and didn't belong—to a range of social groupings, of which congregations seem to have been one of the less popular options.<sup>113</sup> This was because of the stringencies of membership, but also because of

conflicting visions of how to balance idiosyncratic localisms with Jewish expressions elsewhere. Jews both longed for elements of their distant homelands and strove toward common American forms, but did so in different measures and in different combinations. They sought cohesion and togetherness, but on their own terms, resulting in a further multiplication of Jewish religious and social forms.

\* \* \*

In 1860 Edward Rosewater, then living in rural Alabama, went home to Cleveland for the high holidays. Upon entering synagogue, he found that “they want[ed] to charge me one Dollar.” He left in a huff for a different synagogue, noting in his diary that it “makes me awful mad to see such mean tricks.”<sup>114</sup> Rosewater found out the hard way that while sometimes Jewish practice and American voluntarism propped each other up, at other times they worked at cross-purposes and produced woeful confusion. Fraternal orders and societies could serve as vehicles for affiliation with other Jews, with non-Jews, or with both and could complement or replace other kinds of Jewish belonging. Congregations could foster close-knit Jewish ritual life, make room for shameless free riders, or create opportunities for inclusion among those who had flagrantly broken with Jewish law. Worship could unify, but it could also splinter and confuse.

Mobility made these ironies especially clear, as it inspired Americans to seek community—in explicitly religious settings and otherwise—while making it difficult to discern and to verify the basis of belonging, be it belief or genealogical ties, occasional rites or daily practice. Amidst this uncertainty, congregations struggled to make membership a privilege and responsibility that all Jews would want to submit to and to align with larger Jewish expressions. For many Jews, however, congregational affiliation would remain a haphazard and temporary mode of religious identification, one that was secondary to informal social ties, newspapers, societies, charity, fraternal orders, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, family life. This was not because they were apathetic, but because these forms of belonging simply worked better in their mobile, and sometimes lonely, American lives.

## **Part II**

### **The Lived Religion of American Jews**



## I Prefer Choice Myself

### Family and the State

Lazard Kahn was worried about finding a wife. In the early 1870s the French-born Kahn, then in his early twenties and moving around the South and Midwest, wrote, “From present indications I don’t think I will ever find any one who cares enough for me to be my own + I have therefore given up all hope of ever succeeding.” Lazard had a full social life—including three brothers in the United States and membership in B’nai B’rith—and yet he was unhappy. By 1881 he would meet and marry a Louisiana Jewish woman, Coralie Lemann, but not before he experienced considerable romantic woe.<sup>1</sup> For Kahn and other Jewish men, feelings of loneliness were not limited to gendered camaraderie but extended to the more intimate realm of family life. Male and female migrants longed for their natal families, pursued marriage and childrearing, and were periodically forced to confront divorce and death, all of which required proximity to other Jews, access to Jewish resources, and attention to *halakhic* regulations that emphasized purity, ritual, and proper form.

Migrants to the United States were predominantly young men in their late teens and early twenties, many of whom had lost one or both parents.<sup>2</sup> Take, for instance, Jacob Rosenberg, who lost his father at age five and was raised in Fordon, a small city in Posen (then part of Prussia) by his mother, of whom he later remembered that “all her means to support herself and us three children was half the interest in a small cottage and two seats in the Synagogue.” He was sent to a Jewish school and in his teenage years began working as an itinerant tailor.<sup>3</sup> Although he may not always have been aware of it, Rosenberg’s experiences of family and the life cycle were structured and supported by the Prussian state. It funded the local Jewish *Gemeinde*, which oversaw his circumcision and schooling, as well as his parents’ marriage and his father’s burial. In Prussia, as in other central and eastern European states, these religious rituals were even

mandated as matters of population management, public health, and Jewish policy.<sup>4</sup> In the United States, by contrast, marriage, divorce, birth registration, education, and burial were all legislated by individual states. They offered supports to religious practices, including some Jewish ones, but also supplied a range of alternatives. Jurists and policy makers balanced concerns for individual choice and the common good, variously defined, but they regularly encouraged unified, male-dominated families.

The challenges of this new legal arrangement were exacerbated by unfettered mobility. Lucky immigrants came to the United States in partial family groups, most often with brothers or other male relatives. The vast majority, however, moved through the continent without parents or relatives, and as they did so, they found that there was a shortage of Jewish women to marry and of religious authorities to oversee ritual. Parents and leaders alike fretted about these single Jews. For instance, in the late 1850s, Leib and Breindl Loewner of Königswalde, in Saxony, regularly entreated their son Mendel, who lived in rural Ohio, to “move to a larger city where a better religious life is possible and where people don’t ask what a Jew looks like.”<sup>5</sup> Breindl urged him to marry a Jewish girl and instructed his brother Samuel to “mov[e] into a city where you can educate your children in worldly and religious matters and where you can be Jews again.”<sup>6</sup> Leaders like M. N. Nathan likewise asked small-town Jews, “Can you not stamp your offspring with the seal of the covenant of circumcision? And is there any preventive to your children forming suitable alliances with Hebrew blood?”<sup>7</sup> For these parents and leaders, to be Jewish was to be part of a family unit that observed Jewish law within communal settings.

American life would allow Jews to deviate considerably from this *halakhic* model, which had developed over millennia, originating in the Talmud and explicated in compendia like the sixteenth-century *Shulkhan Arukh*, the most influential code of Jewish law. While it is impossible to know exactly how many Jews did and did not break with tradition, what is important is that the legal regime of the United States offered new contexts, challenges, and options. Parents and leaders at the time—who have been echoed by subsequent historians—lamented the widespread intermarriage, neglect of education, and lapse of ritual forms in this period, seeing them as signs of easy assimilation. The more complicated reality, however, is that men and women continued to form Jewish

families on the road and in far-flung towns, although they were only optionally connected to congregations and Jewish law. Seeking stability and identity in the face of logistical challenges, Jews embraced ideals like romantic love, the nurture of children, and sentimentalized death, which could serve the fulfillment of traditional Jewish strictures but could also hinder, redirect, or expand them.

## **Marital Matters**

Leib Loewner wrote to his older son, Samuel, that Fanny Beck, a local girl who fancied Mendel, was about to emigrate. She, he insisted, “would be good for Mendel rather than marry a gentile girl. She knows to make liquors, also embroidery.”<sup>8</sup> In an 1859 letter from Mendel’s mother to his brother, however, we learn that Mendel had a child with a non-Jewish woman, although the infant soon died.<sup>9</sup> Mendel Loewner, like Lazard Kahn, navigated loneliness, heartbreak, and Jewish familial norms as he traveled on his own. Leib and Breindl, like many other parents, tried to oversee their son’s choices through correspondence, but found that parenting on paper could not exert much influence. Furthermore, they had to contend with the fact that in the United States, understandings of what made a Jewish family were rapidly changing.

Jewish migration was motivated by concerns both economic and marital. The largest proportion of migrants came from Bavaria, where the infamous *Matrikel* policy limited the number of Jewish families in a given locale, making marriage impossible for many young people.<sup>10</sup> Men hoped to find marriage partners in the United States, while young women often migrated as newlyweds with men whose searches had been unsuccessful. Indeed, even in the absence of restrictive policies, there were new challenges to Jewish matrimony. Among its extensive regulations of family life, Jewish law included a prohibition on marriage with non-Jews.<sup>11</sup> But in the United States, Jewish women were few and far between. In 1844 Isaac Leeser reported that in Saint Louis the Jewish community numbered “sixty or seventy,” although they were “nearly all men.”<sup>12</sup> In 1873 a correspondent from Helena, Montana, reported, “I am sorry to say that we have not one Jewish young lady in our midst. But three were ever in this city and they were engaged to be married within a few months.”<sup>13</sup>

While European governments generally enforced bans on Jewish intermarriage, American law did not adjudicate individual religious identities. Furthermore, state-based statutes only limited marriages involving close relatives, those under a particular age or of unsound mind, and, most significantly, people of different races.<sup>14</sup> Because the state deemed Jews white, there were few legal limits on Jews' marital possibilities. Isaac Leeser noted of the Jews of New Orleans that, "owing to the paucity of Jewish young women, many intermarriages had taken place with other persuasions."<sup>15</sup> In spite of Jewish leaders' objections, however, marriage to a non-Jew did not necessarily indicate abandonment of Jewish identity. Jews married to non-Jewish women sought inclusion in Jewish congregations and continued to associate with coreligionists. For instance, in Eureka, Nevada, in 1877, a hotel keeper named Baum proudly told Isaac Mayer Wise, "My wife is a Shikseh," using a Yiddish term for a non-Jewish woman.<sup>16</sup>

Those who made matches with Jewish women did so through stints in Jewish settlements, through social ties, and through correspondence. In 1833 Mordecai Manuel Noah told his wife to "tell Abe I think I have a wife in my eye for him—very clean—not very handsome + has \$10,000 to which I know he can have no solid objections + I shall tell him about her when I see him."<sup>17</sup> In the 1870s L. Erstein wrote from Alexandria, Louisiana, to a friend in Montgomery asking him to "look out for a girl for me too."<sup>18</sup> Following postal service reforms in the 1840s, correspondence was cheaper and easier than ever and it proved crucial in making introductions and in the process of courtship itself as it created new expectations of intimacy across space. For instance, in 1870 Moses Greensfelder of Baltimore began writing to Carrie Levi, who had recently moved to Saint Louis, and proposed within a week.<sup>19</sup> S. Franklin of Silver City, Idaho, tried to use the press to this end in 1873, describing himself in the *Israelite* as

a young coreligionist, doing a large business in the wilds of Idaho [who] would like to form the acquaintance of some young lady and therefore politely requests correspondence . . . in English, French or German.<sup>20</sup>

Such long-distance, correspondence-based courtships were not uncommon. The American Jewish press printed announcements of marital connections made between brides and grooms, for example, from Philadelphia and Omaha; Yazoo City, Mississippi, and New Orleans; and Courtland, Alabama, and “Louisville, Ky, formerly of St. Louis, Mo.”<sup>21</sup> Jews were mobile, and so were their courtships.

These new, long-distance matches were made according to new values and standards. In the 1830s Mordecai Noah—like the German Loewners two decades later—emphasized propriety and money in his matchmaking endeavors. Marriage for him and for many older relatives was an economic relationship and a religious rite requiring family approval. In 1858 Rahle Abals, an immigrant in Stockton, California, wrote to a male relative in Yiddish congratulating him on his recent marriage and reporting on the engagement of a Miss Shivarkh to a Mr. Falk. “They cannot decide what to do,” she reported, since “the brothers were against it . . . [because] the young one has nothing.”<sup>22</sup> S. Franklin’s *Israelite* ad also demonstrated this view of marriage by pointing to his “large business” and status as a “coreligionist.” But for many young Jews, moving alone through a nation in which economic and religious identities were notoriously uncertain, such criteria faded in importance.

Take Lazard Kahn’s brother Felix, who acknowledged that it would be folly to marry too soon because “we got parents and sisters and the last come before us.” And yet he nonetheless hoped for a good match, which, he wrote to Lazard, meant that above and beyond beauty and money, “I require more a purpose: love . . . I prefer choice myself.”<sup>23</sup> Moses Greensfelder wrote to Carrie, “I want a wife, I want a home, I want somebody to love and somebody to love me.”<sup>24</sup> She happened to be Jewish, but she needn’t have been to fit those criteria. The turn to romantic love—which was visible in American culture more generally—also undergirded marriages between Jews and non-Jews. In 1864 Rachel Rosalie Phillips, who was visiting Washington, D.C., received a proposal from an army captain who “said he had no objections to change his religion, that he would not let it interfere with his love.”<sup>25</sup> Phillips rejected his advances—it was rare for Jewish women to marry non-Jews—but the subjective standards that motivated the captain also fueled many marriages among Jews and between Jewish men and Christian women.<sup>26</sup>

American conditions complicated Jewish weddings as well as Jewish matches. The traditional Jewish wedding was a formulaic ceremony involving an Aramaic contract, or *ketubah*, and performed by a knowledgeable Jewish officiant before a prayer quorum. In the United States, by contrast, marriage was a civil contract sometimes overseen by ministers. Upon engagement, Jews could—and did—easily procure civil marriages through common-law, judges, justices of the peace, or friendly ministers, without regard to religious identity or ritual precision.<sup>27</sup> A couple might avoid a religious ceremony altogether or find a compromise. In one week in 1876, for instance, there were two Jewish weddings in Chattanooga, Tennessee. One was performed first by a justice of the peace and then by a knowledgeable local Jew, while a second one was officiated by a local Jewish lawyer who was also a justice of the peace.<sup>28</sup>

States did grant Jewish ministers the power to officiate, however, and many Jews chose to marry through nascent congregations, which saw the regulation of family life as a central task. When Saint Louis's United Hebrew Congregation was founded in 1841, it was in part "to pay for the lot already purchased for the interment of the dead," and the congregation's secretary was expected to record "all births, marriages and burials."<sup>29</sup> Ten years later, the stated goals of San Francisco's new Congregation Sherith Israel were likewise

the perpetuation of the Jewish Religion, . . . the solemnization of marriages among and the burial of those of our faith in accordance with established and time honored customs and rites of the Jewish Religion, to establish and foster schools for the dissemination of the tenets of the Jewish religion and for the diffusion of a knowledge of the ancient language and history of our people.<sup>30</sup>

Sherith Israel kept a book of marriage contracts, which included many Jews from outlying gold country towns who sought out a *hazan* to perform the ceremony. Among those records are the 1865 marriages of Louis Nathan and Samuel Appel, who were both married to converts. This is clear in the records because listed, alongside their given names, are Jewish



first names and the last name “Abraham,” as in “son/daughter of Abraham,” which is attached to the Hebrew names of converts. Nathan married “Deborah Abraham formerly Doreas Ash,” while Appel married “Rebecca Abraham (Caroline Andrey).” Small-town Jews, including those marrying non-Jewish women, went to congregations like Sherith Israel when it came time to marry, if never before or after.<sup>31</sup>

Although congregations were often unstable and religious authorities uncertain, U.S. law and the exigencies of mobility elevated their importance in the realm of marriage. Henry Hochheimer, the *hazan* at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, performed over nine hundred marriages between 1850 and 1890, in Baltimore as well as throughout Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Delaware, and Washington, D.C.<sup>32</sup> Some couples that had already been married civilly went to congregations afterward for purposes of conversion. Rabbi Max Lilienthal oversaw a conversion in 1852 of Marie Esther Ber de Lot, which he described as “enter[ing] her under the wings of Judaism.” She had been civilly married to a Jew for several years and had her son circumcised, “therefore she too says that their people is my people, their God is my God, whither they go I shall go and where they die shall I die.”<sup>33</sup> While working in Ohio, Marcus M. Spiegel, a rabbi’s son from Abenheim, Germany, met and married a Quaker woman; she later converted to Judaism in Chicago and continued to practice after her husband’s death in the Civil War.<sup>34</sup> The boundary between Jew and non-Jew was porous, and Jews found that they could pass both ways through conversion of their Christian spouse.

When Jewish marriages went awry, husbands and wives likewise had new choices. In Jewish law, divorce required the husband to procure a *get*, an Aramaic decree written by a scribe with two non-relative witnesses present, which would then be delivered to the wife under the supervision of a learned rabbinic court. Second marriages for women were allowed only in the case of a *get* or if there was substantial evidence that a husband had died, without which they were rendered *agunot*, chained women unable to remarry.<sup>35</sup> Whereas form, procedure, and male agency mattered most in Jewish divorces, in American law, divorce was a civil procedure subject to debates centered on fault. As divorce rates increased, some states liberalized their laws, but others considered divorce a matter of public morality and limited it to grounds of adultery, abandonment, or cruelty.<sup>36</sup>



While at least one newspaper claimed that there were no divorces among Jews, in the words of California rabbi Julius Eckman, “divorces do occasionally take place among us, as they do among Christians.”<sup>37</sup> Ideally, these Jews would have procured both Jewish and American divorces, but there were several alternatives. They could obtain a *get*, and maybe only a *get*, remaining married under American law. Unhappy husbands may have committed bigamy, bypassing all divorce proceedings and relocating to a new place where they could present themselves as unmarried. Others seem to have used civil procedures exclusively, whether because of convenience or ignorance. In 1859 a Mr. Hyneman and the former Rachel Hyman, who had settled together in Saint Paul, Minnesota, divorced because “he was jealous of her, she says.” They received a civil divorce, but they had not known to procure a *get*, and when Rabbi Morris Raphall discovered that fact, he stepped in, informing her father that “neither he nor she can marry again within the pale of our religion.” She had rejoined her family, who had recently moved from Richmond to New York, and he was in Philadelphia, but preparing to move to California, where it is likely no one would have asked or cared about his marital history. Raphall now charged Isaac Leeser with convincing Mr. Hyneman to grant his ex-wife a Jewish divorce, “an act of justice to himself and to another person . . . whom he has bound himself in the [*ketubah*] to which he signed his name, ‘to protect and to cherish’: an obligation from which no decree but the [Jewish divorce decree] can ever release.” Even as Raphall sought desperately to maintain *halakhic* standards, at least some ordinary Jews saw the tools of the state as sufficient for the regulation of Jewish family life.<sup>38</sup>

Raphall’s concern shows that decisions about divorce, although made by individual couples, had public dimensions and could become sites of communal censure. In 1852 some Jews protested what they saw as an illegitimate *get*, overseen in Cleveland by Joseph Levy, a learned but unordained volunteer *hazan*. Leeser insisted that he had appropriate qualifications and that the *get* “was, to our apprehension, entirely conformable to the Jewish law.” He further argued for “the impropriety of the question, ‘Who is authorized in Cleveland to grant a divorce?’ as though all the rights of the Jewish Church were inherent in New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia only.”<sup>39</sup>

While few asked questions about the marriage of two born Jews, there were similar suspicions about conversions to Judaism. In the absence of established authorities, Jewish leaders were concerned about “those who make proselytes for money,” and those who declared themselves converted without having undergone any training, examination, or ceremony.<sup>40</sup> In 1849 a Jewish minister lied to the Jews of Pittsburgh, telling them that his non-Jewish wife—to whom he had been married by a magistrate—had converted in Philadelphia, so that he could obtain a Jewish marriage ceremony.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, in Nashville, some zealous Jews hesitated to bury a deceased converted woman in the Jewish cemetery because there was no certificate proving her status.<sup>42</sup> In matters of divorce, as in marriage and conversion, mobile Jews selectively engaged with competing American and Jewish legal systems, although confusion and disagreement were common.

Jewish marriages, then, were created and dissolved through individual effort and American law as much as through family and community. Parental involvement waned, and even as congregational leaders and rabbis worried about intermarriage, fraudulent conversions, and suspect divorces, ordinary Jews mostly disregarded ritual and *halakhic* precision. In their quest for stable Jewish families, they instead made decisions based on personal intent and emotion, which proved more certain and portable amidst the fluid boundaries and widespread mobility of American life. For most Jews, family life was neither an exclusive congregational matter nor a binary decision between commitment to and rejection of *halakhah*. Rather, it was improvised in informal networks using the diverse social and legal resources of American life.

### **(Pro)Creating Jews**

In 1848 orthodox rabbi Abraham Rice wrote to Isaac Leeser, wondering whether there was any way to ensure “that every married Jewish lady has to go to [the *mikveh*, the ritual bath]?”<sup>43</sup> He very well could have asked the same about ritual circumcision and religious education, although the answer in all cases was no. Jews were commanded in Genesis to “be fruitful and multiply,” but on the road and in the absence of official institutions and authorities, creating Jewish children was no small feat.

*Mikva'ot* (ritual baths) for marital purity, skilled *mohalim* (circumcisors) to perform circumcisions, and educational tools to teach children could be hard to find, not to mention expensive. Women and men continued to establish Jewish families, but they did so using new tools and new criteria that were better suited for the road.

While much of Jewish law was general—like Sabbath observance—or limited to adult men—like worship—it also attended to children and their mothers, dictating modes of conception, initiation, and education. A set of Talmudic regulations known as *niddah* demanded that married women abstain from sexual intercourse during and for a certain amount of time after their menstruation. They could resume intimacy only after fully immersing in a *mikveh*, a ritual bath of natural, free-flowing water, a step that gave women some nominal sexual agency. Jewish identity passed through the mother, but boys were additionally required to submit to the ceremony of *milah*, or circumcision, performed by a knowledgeable Jew according to specific instructions. This was to be later supplemented by intensive instruction, at least in the Hebrew language of Jewish prayer, and ideally in the textual traditions of the Bible and the Talmud. In theory, if not always in practice, the Jewish family was marked by multiple gendered measures of inclusion linked to ritual process, timing, and linguistic and textual skills.<sup>44</sup>

While U.S. states tended to grant broad individual rights—and enable Jewish involvement—when it came to marriage, in term of family relations, as in divorce, they were not as supportive. Courts denied legal independence to children and wives while granting husbands conjugal rights. At the same time, individual states worked to establish forms of public schooling and new systems of birth registration, although neither project was complete or completely secular. Public schools incorporated Protestant prayer and Bible reading as tools of morality, even as they competed with private sectarian schools. And while under-registration of children was the rule, when necessary, states regularly accepted family Bibles and church records as legitimate evidence of age and identity. In the regulation of Jewish families, the U.S. state offered new frameworks that could supplant, conflict, or coincide with *halakhic* regulations.<sup>45</sup>

It was easy for American Jews to neglect marital purity laws and circumcision while sending their children to public schools, whether

because of principle or logistics. But many did try to follow traditional regulations, taking matters into their own hands. Women, for instance, could practice *niddah* using freestanding bodies of flowing water or through other arrangements. Isaac Leiser received a letter in 1866 from Shreveport, Louisiana, asking whether “in a city where it is altogether impossible to get the proper [arrangements],” it was possible to use “a large bath tub . . . of the proper dimensions filled with rain water.”<sup>46</sup> Technically this woman’s effort was not *halakhically* legitimate, but it shows that she was trying to maintain the laws of female purity and perhaps her own sexual agency. There were also rare cases of fathers circumcising their own sons and of knowledgeable relatives teaching children in the family.<sup>47</sup>

While *niddah* was intensely private and site-specific, in the cases of circumcision and education, independent institutions and practitioners emerged to supply far-flung families. In 1869 the Jews of Lafayette, Indiana, “especially the married people,” regretted the departure of Mr. M. Ullman, and “congratulate[d] any Jewish community where he resides,” because “as a skilled and experienced *Mohel* his superior can not be found between the Atlantic and the Pacific.”<sup>48</sup> Some sought out a doctor rather than a trained *mohel* for the ceremony. In 1869 Isaac Mayer Wise reported, “We have been repeatedly asked the question, whether in places where no *Mohel* can be had, an operation might not be performed by any physician who understands it.” He answered that it was fine as long as the prayer was recited by a Jew.<sup>49</sup> Alternatively, *mohalim* were brought in from nearby cities for a fee. For instance, in 1872 the Reverend M. A. H. Fleischer from Denver was brought to New Mexico by local Jews, who “put themselves to great inconvenience and expense in order to fulfill the covenant and [were] much pleased at the scientific manner in which the operation was performed.”<sup>50</sup>

Traveling *mohalim* also began to serve far-flung Jews. F. Backman, who had been a *mohel* in Europe, was remarkably productive, performing over twelve hundred circumcisions in the sixteen years following his 1848 arrival in America, an average of seventy-six per year. Based in Philadelphia, he circumcised throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey, periodically traveling to places further afield, from Maine and Delaware to Chicago and Georgia.<sup>51</sup> Many *mohalim* advertised their services in the Jewish press. For instance, the Reverend Simon Gerstmann, upon taking

up a position at Meridian, Mississippi's congregation, "inform[ed] his brethren that he is an experienced Mohel, and will practice the rite of circumcision in the vicinity and country, whenever called upon."<sup>52</sup> These men usually kept careful records of the boys' names, ages, and fathers, which might have been useful in states with weak birth registration procedures.

Travel also facilitated Jewish education. Small-town boys went to big cities in order to attend private and all-day Jewish schools, which in 1849 alone were created in Philadelphia, Richmond, Cleveland, and Cincinnati.<sup>53</sup> These schools offered basic Jewish literacy that could not be found elsewhere as well as secular subjects. They were reserved for those with adequate financial resources, as, presumably were the services of Jewish governesses, like two young women from Mississippi who advertised their services in the *American Israelite* in 1875.<sup>54</sup> For the poorest children, Jewish orphan asylums were established from charitable funds, in Philadelphia in 1855, New Orleans in 1856, New York in 1860, Cleveland in 1868, and Baltimore in 1872.<sup>55</sup> Jewish education was also enacted through printed materials, which could cheaply and efficiently reach children in isolated towns. Isaac Leeser and others published catechisms and Hebrew textbooks, amounting to an estimated twenty-two educational texts between 1829 and 1850.<sup>56</sup> By the 1870s, a newspaper especially for children, the *Sabbath School Visitor*, was established under the direction of Rabbi Max Lilienthal. He believed that "no matter how little [small-town Jews] can observe of Jewish rules and regulations, the education of their children must not be neglected."<sup>57</sup>

Congregations supplemented these diverse institutions and markets for religious ritual and education. By the 1850s congregations in Baltimore, Cincinnati, Rochester, Richmond, and Chicago had built *mikva'ot*, adding to those established in New York and Philadelphia in the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Congregations hired *hazanim* who could serve as *mohalim* as well as teachers and ran their own schools, initially day schools but increasingly supplementary schools to serve the many Jewish children who received a public education. This supply of Jewish resources could not guarantee traditional practice, however, as mobility encouraged new understandings of proper family life. Even in New York, where there were several *mikva'ot*, over the course of seven months in 1871, only two hundred married women—out of an estimated four thousand in the city—

used the more popular *mikveh*, at Congregation Anshe Chesed.<sup>59</sup> *Mikveh* proprietors like Mrs. Noot, wife of a New York *hazan*, had to remind Jewish women

of an indispensable religious duty incumbent on them, and which can only be performed in a *Mikvah* lawfully constructed, any other mode is unlawful and therefore in a religious point of view void and altogether useless.<sup>60</sup>

While evidence about women's *mikveh* usage and sexual lives is scant, then, we do know that stringent observance was far from universal.

Some congregations tried to deny membership to men who had not circumcised their sons, and Isaac Leiser openly warned about "those who have in violation of the law left their children uncircumcised (of which we regret to say there are several in this country)." He encouraged readers to "urge upon those whom they know to have neglected the law, to remedy the omission without delay."<sup>61</sup> Circumcision does seem to have been widely practiced, likely because it was a onetime ritual that marked communal inclusion on the male body. Many boys were circumcised well past the eighth day of life, however. Sometimes a set of brothers would all be circumcised at the same time. For instance, in July 1851 a Nashville father named Eliezer had his three sons—aged six, three, and fourteen months—circumcised together. Between 1867 and 1877, John Elsner, a Denver doctor and *mohel*, performed fifty-two circumcisions. Thirty percent of them—mostly performed on boys from outside the city—occurred after the eighth day, ranging from nine days to five years, with one case of a twenty-seven-year-old.<sup>62</sup>

In this context, notions of authentic Jewish children and childhood grew ever more expansive. Some Jewish men insisted that their offspring with non-Jewish wives be identified as Jews, even though *halakhah* dictated that religious identity was inherited from the mother.<sup>63</sup> In an 1859 deposition, Jacob Bernard of Saint Louis argued that although he had married a non-Jewish woman, "I never changed my religion, had born three male children that are now seven, five, and three years respectively." Importantly turning to the tools of U.S. law, he wanted it known that his children were to be educated as Jews and that they had been circumcised



in January of that year.<sup>64</sup> In New Orleans in the mid-1860s, Rabbi Bernard Illowy demanded that local *mohalim* cease circumcising sons of Christian mothers, but one *mohel* insisted on continuing to do so, whether because of religious conviction or, as Illowy alleged, because of “his circumcision fees.”<sup>65</sup>

Jewish-Christian boundaries also proved unstable in other aspects of childrearing. Most Jewish children were sent to public schools that included Protestant prayers and Bible reading, although Jews occasionally joined Catholics in fighting these practices.<sup>66</sup> Even outside school, however, at least some Jews utilized Protestant educational resources—for instance, the “Now I lay me down to sleep” prayer, of which Leeser wrote, “it certainly embraces nothing Jewish.” One Southern father had written to him specially requesting “a [replacement] prayer suitable for his child.”<sup>67</sup> Jews also borrowed the Protestant form of the Sunday school. In Philadelphia in 1838, Rebecca Gratz and other Jewish women had begun the first Jewish Sunday school, directly inspired by their Protestant neighbors. While there was some Hebrew education, the core of the curriculum was the Bible, at first taught with Protestant textbooks. The teachers were female volunteers and the endeavor was funded through charitable contributions and tuition from those who could afford it.<sup>68</sup> This model soon spread to other cities, like New York, Charleston, Savannah, and Richmond, cities that had a sizeable population of native-born women who could volunteer as teachers.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the expansion of Jewish educational institutions—and the success, in eastern cities, of Sunday schools—indifference and neglect seem to have been widespread. Aaron Haas of Atlanta wrote of his years receiving religious instruction in Philadelphia in the 1850s, “I did not make as good use of my time as I might have.”<sup>70</sup> In 1859 *hazan* Henry Loewenthal of Macon, Georgia, complained, “The school that I opened with some pride + rieguer [*sic*] will soon be closed for want of patronage.” He had recently held a public examination on a Sunday afternoon, “yet the most of the parents of those children war [*sic*] absent.”<sup>71</sup> In 1875 Mr. Bloom, who taught Hebrew on Saturdays at Detroit’s Beth El, reported that “the average attendance was so very bad that they progressed very little in this study,” although he noted that they had made more progress in catechism and history, themselves new, more modern subjects of Jewish education.<sup>72</sup>



Deviations from Jewish law and practice were not only signs of apathy or ignorance, however. Rather, they were signs of a new family ideology, premised on sentiment rather than *halakhic* principles. Despite its widespread neglect, few religious leaders called attention to *niddah*. Instead, they continually praised the piety of mothers in Israel, invoking a more generic—and portable—understanding of purity. A rare article on the topic in San Francisco's *Weekly Gleaner* in 1857 reinterpreted *niddah*, along with *challah* and candle lighting, two other commandments designated for women, as matters not of legal precision but of "Purity, Charity, and Sanctity."<sup>73</sup> Women's rituals were reinterpreted in sentimental terms, circumcision was described as "scientific," and Jewish education was cast as a matter of morality and propriety, both in religious schools and in publications. The *Sabbath School Visitor* defined itself as a remedy to the fact that "our children hear very little about religion in their homes; that the Bible is very seldom opened or read by our firesides; that the glorious history of our nation is almost a sealed book to most of our young ones."<sup>74</sup> In congregations, education was increasingly centered on elaborate confirmation ceremonies for boys and girls, replete with floral arrangements, white clothing, and pious biblical discourses. The Jewish child, then, was not a product of intensive textual study requiring a skilled teacher and expensive texts, but was educated in Jewish perspectives on the Bible, history, and morality. These lessons could be gained in the home—and from women—as much as in Jewish institutions, and they nicely supplemented, and even counteracted, the teaching of those subjects in public schools.<sup>75</sup>

Where the state no longer provided direct oversight, Jewish congregations stepped in, building *mikva'ot*, creating schools, and hiring *mohalim*, although they were far from universally used. Isaac Leeser and others worried that "the children of those brought up in isolation from our religious community are very apt to drop off silently and unresistingly."<sup>76</sup> With their mobility unfettered, however, many Jews had to—or chose to—regulate their families on their own. Even as Jews developed means of distributing the materials of Jewish socialization, their adoption took a range of idiosyncratic forms, in content, medium, and clientele. For most, the creation of Jewish families still involved pure Jewish women, ritual circumcision, and religious education, although they need not strictly follow *niddah*, occur on the eighth day or to a *halakhically* Jewish son, or

involve intensive textual study, respectively. Instead, they were understood in terms that could be undertaken anywhere there was a home and a family.

## **Death and Mourning**

The parents of Charleston native Raphael Jacob Moses died in Apalachicola, Florida, in the late 1840s.<sup>77</sup> His mother went first, and his wife, “with her usual self-sacrifice, performed all the duties of preparing her for burial,” cleaning the body, wrapping it in a simple shroud, and remaining with it until burial, which took place in a yard near their house. His father began to “pray at her grave daily, though he was never before religiously inclined,” until his own death six months later. Though far from coreligionists and Jewish institutions, the Moses family, like many other mobile Jews, remained relatively fastidious surrounding death, a life cycle event that all eventually faced.<sup>78</sup>

Jewish law and custom required separate Jewish burial grounds and particular ritual observances around death. In this realm, however, there was little tension between Jewish law and state regulations. In the United States, the dead were buried in churchyards, domestic graveyards, and increasingly in the nineteenth century, through privately owned cemetery associations and commercial enterprises in which families purchased plots. The state provided burial only for society’s poorest, in potter’s fields.<sup>79</sup> Almost immediately upon finding a small number of coreligionists, then, Jews purchased their own burial grounds. Death and mourning were undertaken in particular commercial and logistical contexts, often outside synagogues, and in the process, their scope expanded dramatically.<sup>80</sup>

Even in small towns like Quincy, Illinois, the Jewish press reported, “our brethren have bought some two years ago a parcel of land, and devoted it to a Jewish burial ground.”<sup>81</sup> In the California gold country, cemeteries were the first Jewish organizations, and could be found in Sonora, Mokelumne Hill, Jackson, Placerville, Grass Valley, and Nevada City.<sup>82</sup> Burial grounds often inspired or were the initial goal of Jewish societies. Los Angeles’s Hebrew Benevolent Society was founded in 1854 with the express purpose of “procur[ing] a piece of ground suitable for the

purpose of a Burying Ground for the deceased of their own faith.”<sup>83</sup> In Davenport, Iowa, in 1855 the cost of such a burial ground was \$200, raised through contributions by local Jews.<sup>84</sup>

When death struck, Jewish friends took responsibility for one another. In the 1840s a traveling companion of Haiman Spitz died in their boardinghouse in New Orleans. Spitz immediately “went to several of my countrymen, got the sum together, handed it to the man at the hospital, got the body, and had it buried in a Jewish burying ground.”<sup>85</sup> In 1855 the infant daughter of Mr. L. Cohen of Michigan City, Indiana, died, and he and his wife, “having no assistance near at hand and desirous to have their offspring buried in the Jewish rites,” asked for help from Jacob Wilfe, a former neighbor from nearby Laporte, Indiana. While Wilfe “considered this a duty, incumbent upon us, to obey such a summons without delay,” upon taking the body to Chicago, presumably a pricey journey, the family faced difficulties finding a place to put it. They were rudely turned away by a Jewish boardinghouse and finally had to pay two dollars for a room to perform ritual purification. Jews could guarantee such arrangements by joining mutual aid societies. These promised to “provide the sick members with benefits, doctors and medicine, day and night watch and in case of death to bury them.”<sup>86</sup> Where possible, poor Jews were sent to die in Jewish hospitals, which were established between 1849 and 1871 in New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Chicago.<sup>87</sup>

Congregations owned burial grounds, although nonmembers were not always granted plots. In New York, Shearith Israel would only bury members, while Emanu El required the family of an unaffiliated deceased Jew to pay a nominal sum. On several occasions these synagogues tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the city to provide a Jewish potter’s field so that they would not be left with the burden.<sup>88</sup> So important was burial that following his 1877 expulsion from New Orleans’s Dispersed of Judah congregation, H. W. Soares went to the courts seeking reinstatement, claiming not only that it had been illegal, but that “the right to be buried in its burying-ground will be, or is denied him.”<sup>89</sup> Burial questions might have been especially salient in New Orleans, with its high water table, but they were also important elsewhere. Despite the restrictions of some congregations, even Jews who had intermarried or otherwise disassociated from the Jewish community wanted to be buried in Jewish cemeteries. According to one account, the first Jewish burying ground in Cincinnati

was founded, in 1821, after an ailing man, who had lived his life as a Christian, “requested that some Jewish men be brought to his bedside” so that he could confess his dying wish, to be buried as a Jew.<sup>90</sup>

Often corpses had to await their relocation to Jewish burying grounds. Louis Meyer buried his brother in a nearby plot with other Jews in their residence of Harrisonburg, Louisiana, but he eventually requested and received permission to have all of the bodies reinterred in the cemetery of New Orleans’s Shangaray Chassed congregation.<sup>91</sup> Moses Serfaty made arrangements to be buried in Charleston before moving his family to Jacksonville, Florida. When he died in 1857 it was reported in his obituary, “Though he died among strangers, it was a consolation to him to know that his remains would be laid near those of his brothers in faith.”<sup>92</sup> In many cases, however, the location of a final resting place had more to do with individual sentiment than Jewish law. Wills conveyed wishes for burial in particular places or near certain people. After years of petitions, in 1851 New York’s Congregation Shearith Israel began selling family plots.<sup>93</sup> When Catherine Hays, a wealthy native-born woman, died in January 1854, her body was temporarily interred in Richmond because in winter it was “difficult and hazardous” to fulfill her wish to be placed in “the Newport burial ground where those who were dearest to her repose.”<sup>94</sup>

Funerary and mourning practices, especially in small towns, were undertaken among friends and knowledgeable neighbors.<sup>95</sup> In Helena, Montana, in 1870, it was reported that a funeral oration was given by A. Wolfe, presumably a layman, “who officiates with great solemnity and impressiveness on such occasions.”<sup>96</sup> Two years later in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the funeral for Aaron Zeckendorf was overseen by non-Jewish judge Kirby Benedict, “who delivered a feeling funeral address at the cemetery, not only eulogizing the upright gentleman whose remains were there interred but attesting by his honest words to the truths and holiness of Judaism.”<sup>97</sup> After death and on its anniversary, or *yahrzeit*, it was especially important to have access to a *minyan* so that close relatives of the deceased could recite mourning prayers. For instance, in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, in 1866, Bernard Lemann attended “ev[enin]g prayers at Simon Levy’s [because] Father has *jahrzeit*,” and a few weeks later reciprocated to help observe “Henry Loeb’s *yahrzeit*.”<sup>98</sup> Congregations also helped ensure *minyanim* for mourners. In places like Cincinnati’s Lodge Street Synagogue, “it [was] known that people can find

*Minyan* assembled there morning and evening [and] strangers, who have *Yahrzeit* or are mourners, resort thither to say *Kaddish* [the mourner's prayer]."<sup>99</sup> Even Jews who rarely or never worshipped prioritized the requirements of mourning.

While families and informal networks could supplant the role of congregations, on some occasions, congregations could fulfill familial duties. When a Dr. Moody died in Madison, Wisconsin, in the early 1870s, "it was his last wish to die and be buried as a Jew," even though his wife and children had become Episcopalians and demanded that Christian hymns be included in the burial ceremony. Local coreligionists called in a rabbi from Milwaukee, who performed a Jewish funeral and "caused the cong[regation] to rise and say the prayer for the dead for Mr. Moody" instead of his family.<sup>100</sup> This was not the only case of mourning duties expanding beyond the obligatory nuclear family. When his cousin Emma died in 1872, Lazard Kahn lit memorial candles, a practiced associated with *yahrzeit* commemoration, "which we will keep burning a month to commemorate by ceremony as well as otherwise our love."<sup>101</sup> Bernard Lemann likewise "resolved to wear mourning for 30 days" when a Jewish friend died, and following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, Jews throughout the country commemorated him through traditional Jewish means.<sup>102</sup> The Jews of Indianapolis, for example, voted "to keep the synagogue draped in mourning for the coming 90 days and request[ed] . . . at the End of the Service each Sabbath a prayer for the dead President."<sup>103</sup> In these and other cases, Jews ignored the letter of the law, ritually mourning distant relatives, close friends, and even admired—and non-Jewish!—strangers.

Jews penned elaborate eulogies and obituaries for deceased relatives, friends, and fellow members of societies and fraternal orders, publishing them in the Jewish press as new media of public mourning.<sup>104</sup> In November 1866, for instance, Columbus, Georgia's B'nai B'rith chapter passed a resolution lamenting the death of "our friend and Brother" Julius Greenwood and insisted that "with the family of the deceased, we sympathize deeply and . . . share the sorrow of the loss."<sup>105</sup> Women in particular, whose lives otherwise went largely unreported, became the subjects of grim obituaries, like that of Mrs. Pauline Lisso, who had moved with her husband, Abraham, from Saint Louis to Coushatta Chute, Louisiana. She died in childbirth there in 1854, leaving two sons, one

nineteen months, and the other six hours old. The *Occident* obituary read, “may the infants be raised in piety and her soul rest in peace.”<sup>106</sup>

Jewish burial and mourning, then, was not limited to Jewish law, to congregations, or to the nuclear family. Death was one realm among others where Jews selectively engaged Jewish traditions amidst widespread mobility, economic realities, and the laws and policies of American states. Where other practices were often ignored or replaced, however, Jewish death and mourning rituals flourished, not only because of the finality of death, but because this was a realm in which the states were relatively mute. Death practices were not immune to change, however, and they too became subject to new, sentimental understandings of a Jewish family that went well beyond the strictures of Jewish law.

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Miriam Gratz Moses, a native Philadelphian, lamented in May 1834 to her brother and his wife in Kentucky, “Does it not seem cruel that in our short sojourn upon earth we should be thus separated for years from those we love?”<sup>107</sup> The new understandings of family that mobility occasioned were visible not only in major life events, but in everyday practice. Many mobile Jews sought to approximate or augment distant domestic relationships through close friendships, economic ties, and diverse institutions like boardinghouses. Yet women and men also longed for family and home, whether they were separated temporarily or permanently. Upon the death of his wife in 1871, Abraham Tandler, a Bavarian immigrant in San Francisco, wrote, “Now if I only would have my children living with me, that would be a comfort.”<sup>108</sup> Even in the most remote locations, as Daniel Levy wrote from northern California in the 1850s, love of family was “[the one] noble and generous feeling [that] survived. . . . This was the sacred Ark that nothing could and nothing ever will tarnish.”<sup>109</sup>

Correspondence played a central role in the preservation and performance of Jewish families. As Moses explained it, “I really do not know any sensation half so agreeable as that which always accompanies the perusal of an epistle from one we love.”<sup>110</sup> Immigrant women had less time but the same desire. “Well dear Isidore you don’t hear from us frequently,” Rahle Abals wrote to a male relative from Stockton,



California, indicating that time was short because of childcare and work responsibilities. She continued, “I wish dear Isidore that when it will be possible [we can] make arrangements (time) for you and your dear wife to come here.”<sup>111</sup> Letters encouraged travel but also mimicked it. As Dr. Israel Moses wrote to his brother from his military camp in February 1862, “On this Sunday evening I propose to visit you by proxy in the shape of a small note.”<sup>112</sup> Letter writing was used to make matches and cement romantic affections, but also to maintain far-flung family ties.

Unfettered mobility sent white Americans throughout an expansive continent, far from their parents and the resources of religious life. Jewish marriage, divorce, sex, initiation, education, death, and mourning were difficult to enact, and yet never more important as sites of stability and identity. All were now overseen by diverse U.S. jurisdictions, which understood families alternately and even simultaneously as individual and collective, secular and religious, private and public. Mobile Jews wanted Jewish families, but they made pragmatic adaptations on the road, relying upon correspondence and the tools of the state. These encouraged them to prioritize sentimental values of intent, feeling, and morality and led them into, out of, and into conflict with Jewish institutions. Even as American law made it possible for Jews to marry and mix with non-Jews, it also made it possible for those same Jews to reaffirm their Jewish belonging when it mattered to them most. For many, the Jewish family was a site of emotional succor and personal identity more than a venue for *halakhic* obligations. Romantic love, child nurture, and sentimental death were not only deteriorations of traditional Judaism or avenues to American respectability, but portable tactics for coping with the vicissitudes of American life.<sup>113</sup>



## 'Tis in the Spirit Not in the Form

### Material Culture and Popular Theology

During the Civil War, Confederate soldier Edwin Kursheedt depleted the food supply that his sweetheart had given him, and was left with army rations of “bacon + crackers.” Writing to her, perhaps on the same table where he ate, he confessed, “I enjoyed the latter, but have not made up my mind to partake of the former.”<sup>1</sup> Although his wartime conditions were extreme, Kursheedt’s wary consideration of pork without unreserved consumption or outright rejection was typical of the relationship of nineteenth-century American Jews to kosher food laws.<sup>2</sup> Not only were they scattered throughout a huge country in lonely outposts and small pockets, but many Jews were without the materials of traditional Judaism. Kosher meat, Torah scrolls for worship, *shofarot* to trumpet on the high holidays, *lulavim* and *etrogim* plants for the Feast of Booths (Sukkot), *mezuzot* to adorn doorposts, prayer books, and authoritative Jewish knowledge were difficult to procure in the United States at all, let alone to verify or to circulate within its expansive borders and among its dispersed Jewish population. The adaptation to American life required a reconfiguration of worship, social relations, and family life, but also of the material culture and theological principles undergirding them all.<sup>3</sup>

Most Jewish migrants to the United States had upbringings steeped in traditional Jewish practice and thought. As Isaac Leeser described it,

Their education at home may have been religious, such as is met with in the villages of the old country; they probably have learned to read Hebrew, some indeed imperfectly; a few may have been instructed in translating some chapters of the Scriptures and a portion of the prayers and have obtained an insufficient knowledge of the theoretic part of Judaism from catechisms and Bible histories. . . . The vast

majority know but little, except what they gather up from beholding the acts of their simple and piously-minded parents, whom they unconsciously imitate and follow.<sup>4</sup>

The “theoretic part of Judaism” included a tradition of theological reflection found in prayers, in scripture, and in texts like Maimonides’s influential “Thirteen Articles of Faith.” According to that twelfth-century text, Judaism required belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, and invisible God, the verity of the prophets and the Torah, the inevitability of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>5</sup> The “acts” of the parents were part of the expansive system of Jewish law, or *halakhah*, which encompassed a range of commandments linked to various times and activities.

Upon their departure for the United States, Jewish immigrants like eighteen-year-old Herman Kohn were “recommend[ed] the faith of your fathers as the most sacred and the most noble,” which meant monotheistic belief as well as morning and evening prayers, Sabbath observance, and trying “to follow all the Commandments most painstakingly.” Worldly goods were not only to be acquired to attain status but “used as means for the attainment of eternal happiness.” Material practices were means of fulfilling God’s distinctive laws for the Jewish people during ordinary worship, periodic festivals, and everyday life.<sup>6</sup> Solomon Roth’s father acknowledged the material difficulties to come and instructed him, “Should you be forced, partly through circumstances, partly because of the dictates of reason, to omit the ceremonial observances, you must nevertheless under no circumstances depart from the basis of religion: ‘The Eternal, your God, is one, unique, single being.’”<sup>7</sup>

In the United States, these relatives realized, there were scarce religious institutions, few religious authorities, and many competing goods and ideas. The resulting adaptations made by Jews like Kursheedt should not be read as evidence of an inherent heterodoxy, as inevitable outcomes of the American environment, or as proof of a sustained engagement with European Reform, which was questioning much of traditional Judaism in the name of modernity. Rather, Jews’ eclectic material and intellectual formations were methods of transforming anonymity, scarcity, and uncertainty into stable identities—at once religious, existential, and

economic. This chapter argues that Judaism was created within and outside congregations, informal networks, and consumer markets and that rabbis were not the only ones to reflect on the nature of the divine.<sup>8</sup> Evidence of such practices and beliefs are scarce and scattered, but they are there for the careful historian to find and interpret. On the road, criteria for determining authentic Jewish practice and thought expanded well beyond the received canon of Jewish law and theology. Furthermore, this confluence of doing and thinking, of sanctifying diverse material and intellectual resources, fueled the creation of new Jewish ideologies—including Reform Judaism—not the other way around.

## **Jewish Stuff**

In his autobiography, Cincinnati Nathan Cohen remembered staying in the home of a German woman during the Civil War: “I hesitated at the ham [she offered me], but my appetite got away with my religion and I cleaned up.”<sup>9</sup> Like the soldier Kursheedt and many other mobile Jews, Cohen faced a dietary dilemma as he traveled through a country filled with non-Jews and with cheap, non-kosher food. Cohen was in Louisville, a town with a sizeable Jewish population, but many others found themselves far from *shochetim* who could slaughter kosher meat. Kosher wine was almost impossible to come by, and new *halakhic* questions were raised, for instance, about whether California wine, guinea fowls, and Muscovy ducks were kosher. “Eating out” and drinking out became the norm for these Jews, who had to negotiate their culinary and cultural boundaries in situ, developing habits shaped by convenience and price as much as by Jewish law.<sup>10</sup> Although he paused briefly beforehand, Cohen chose to eat the ham, and while he joked about the chasm between his diet and his religion, many of his coreligionists would overcome this divide, deeming a wider range of dietary—and other—materials compatible with Jewish life.

According to Jewish law, Jews could eat only animals that chewed their cud and had cloven hooves, fish with at least one fin and one easily removable scale, and specifically named birds with a tradition of use. These restrictions excluded pork and shellfish from the Jewish diet and further stipulated precise methods of slaughter and consumption, including the separation of dairy and meat products. Jewish law further

forbade the consumption of wine produced by non-Jews. Despite their logistically difficult legal regulations, meat and wine were central to Jewish ritual life, encouraged and sometimes explicitly included in Sabbath, festival, and life cycle celebrations.<sup>11</sup> Other material requirements included Hebrew and Jewish books, Torah scrolls, prayer shawls, phylacteries, and *mezuzot*. A ram's horn, or *shofar*, was needed for the high holidays; during Sukkot Jews were expected to obtain an *etrog*, or citron, along with palm, myrtle, and willow branches; and Passover observance required *matzah*, unleavened bread baked according to exacting standards.

In the United States, these Jewish materials—required or not, perishable or not—were difficult to procure. Some would compete with American materials, while for others there were no clear analogues. As Jews moved through the American continent, commercial networks gradually developed to facilitate access to kosher meat and wine, Jewish books, and ritual objects. They were created through the assistance of the Jewish press, with communities and congregations in some cases facilitating cooperative ownership. Whether purchased or borrowed, collectively or individually, imported or locally produced, the adaptation to capitalism was not seamless. The same market inefficiencies, mismatches between supply and demand, pricing issues, and threats of fraud that were endemic to nineteenth-century American economic life—and which were exacerbated by mobility—complicated the very building blocks of Jewish life.<sup>12</sup>

To be sure, there were Jews like Cohen who, because of indifference or inconvenience, cast kosher food laws aside. Pork consumption was not uncommon among rich and poor Jews alike; one irony of nineteenth-century America was that Cincinnati, “the Jewish metropolis” according to Isaac Mayer Wise, was more widely known as “Porkopolis,” the center of American pork packing and distribution.<sup>13</sup> At least some Jews worked in the pork and non-kosher wine businesses, although it is not clear whether they partook of their purchases. Many Jews consumed seafood that was forbidden, especially oysters, which were a popular health food and aphrodisiac.<sup>14</sup> Despite these temptations, however, other Jews developed hybrid food practices that incorporated some elements of kosher food laws. Aaron Haas remembered of his father's home in Newnan, Georgia, around 1850, “While it was impossible to keep a kosher table, there was

never a piece of hog in my father's house, nor was milk or butter ever on the table with meat."<sup>15</sup> While traveling overland with John C. Fremont in search of a route for the transcontinental railroad, Solomon Nunes Carvalho approximated kosher food restrictions, refusing to consume animal blood or to eat porcupine or coyote meat, the first because it "looked very much like pork," and the second because of the unclean habits of the animal.<sup>16</sup>

Jews negotiated *kashrut* on the road, in private homes, and in Jewish boardinghouses. In a representative issue of the *Israelite* published in December 1858 there were two columns advertising "רשכ [Kosher] Boarding Houses" in Rochester, Syracuse, New York, San Francisco, Detroit, Baltimore, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Evansville, Cincinnati, Saint Louis, and Chicago.<sup>17</sup> There was no real way to verify the *kashrut* of these boardinghouses, but they offered better culinary prospects than did general boardinghouses, which were notorious for their mysterious meat dishes.<sup>18</sup> In Memphis in December 1862, Union Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Spiegel identified some Jews on a Saturday and "asked where one could eat a kosher lunch." He was taken to the boardinghouse of a Mr. Levy, where he found "30 Jews very surprised when I asked if I could have a Chanukah lunch." Although he did not normally keep kosher, he happily sought kosher meals when the opportunity arose.<sup>19</sup>

Some lucky Jews lived in towns, like Norfolk, Virginia, where in 1846, "One of the people has kindly undertaken to kill twice a week; so that *Kasher* meat can be procured by all."<sup>20</sup> At least eighty-nine communities employed *shochetim* between 1820 and 1877, usually through the congregation. In 1869 Isaac Mayer Wise scolded the Jews of Lawrence, Kansas, because they had advertised "'Wanted—a Schochet who can teach,' [when] they should advertise for a teacher who can *schecht*."<sup>21</sup> But even in places where there was a congregational butcher, such as Macon, Georgia, Henry Loewenthal reported, "the Dietary Laws are not observed by the majority—yet [they] send poultry to the [*shochet*] to be killed!" It was common even for *hazanim* and other communal leaders to eat at least vegetarian non-kosher fare. Leeser reportedly ate out and in 1852 there was a "Potatoes" committee established in New Haven to determine whether the vegetables served at a Masonic supper and eaten by the Reverend S. Zunder—whose relations with his congregation were already quite frayed—"were made with butter [. . . or] with lard." Jews wanted

kosher meat for their homes, on special occasions, or as a means to Jewish sociability, but access to it did not restrict their eating habits elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

Over time, nonmembers who wanted to buy kosher meat actively fought congregational monopolies, encouraging deregulation and open competition. In cities like San Francisco and New York, independent kosher caterers sprung up, transforming kosher food from a cooperative investment into a marketed good, and a more expansive American Jewish culinary culture began to take its first steps. In 1871 Esther Levy published the first American Jewish cookbook, and in 1877 two Baltimore Jews, Moses and Louis Ottenheimer, patented a new method of preserving meat “upon the Hebrew plan . . . by cleansing, salting, washing, preserving by spices, canning, and heating.”<sup>23</sup> Impersonal and individualized Judaica markets expanded beyond food, making products available through a variety of modern payment and distribution models, including direct mail and storefront operations, as well as full payment, subscription, and installment plans. Mendel Loewner’s father sent him to America with sixty *mezuzot* to sell to Jews in New York or Baltimore, and in the early 1840s, Jacob Ezekiel wanted to “try to get a copy of the Talmud to this country” by raising a subscription.<sup>24</sup>

Among its other consequences, this commercial approach rendered the authenticity of Jewish objects difficult to verify. In 1853 a note of “Caution” appeared in the *Occident* warning against fraudulent phylacteries and *mezuzot* that were being imported from eastern Europe at low prices. Leeser instructed readers to look for proper certification on imported objects and to buy from local American artisans, adding, “we trust that those who desire to possess them will . . . not buy those which have only cheapness to recommend them.”<sup>25</sup> Likewise, “Yehudi” wrote in the *Israelite* in 1869,

Most people do not seem to understand how easy it is for a butcher to hang out a sign indicating that he sells [kosher] meat; and hence, take it for granted that what they purchase from him must and ought to “be all right.” . . . Butchers can be dishonest as well as grocers and other tradesmen.<sup>26</sup>



But “most people,” it seems, did not care much. On the road, intent is what mattered, and even the appearance of propriety was considered sufficient.

Likewise with kosher wine, product was scarce and rabbinic regulations were, in the words of historian Jonathan Sarna, “observed in the breach.”<sup>27</sup> Although Americans were enthusiastic consumers—and some, equally enthusiastic abstainers—of alcohol, wine was almost entirely imported and was heavily taxed. It was prohibitively expensive for many, and was nearly impossible to find kosher. At least some Jews seem to have instead elevated beer, a favorite German beverage, in religious and social life. In 1855 Rabbi Julius Eckman complained to Solomon Nunes Carvalho about the “strange mode gaining countenance here of celebrating Wedding banquets.” Receptions were being held—and announced in the synagogue—at the non-kosher Shepherds Brewery Saloon. As Eckman described it, “the room was crowded, people got in spirit[, and] four ladies fell headlong to the ground in the room.” He wrote, despairingly, “Jewish weddings in beer houses? Without grace, without a blessing.” Those Jews who did procure kosher wine consumed imported product—although there is evidence of domestic kosher wine production in California in the 1850s—and they likely restricted its use to ritual, festive purposes. In 1861 J. Middleman of New York informed the *Occident*’s readers that he had obtained kosher wine, which, he made sure to point out, was “excellently adapted for every religious purpose.”<sup>28</sup>

While Jews were willing to consume a wider range of edibles and potables in everyday life, they were particularly careful about their consumption of food and beverage during the springtime Passover holiday. Solomon Kahn spent Passover of 1874 in Pleasant Hill, Indiana, writing to his brother, “Pesach so far passes quietly we eat Matzos and drank some wine I brought along instead of giving seder,” although it is unclear whether the wine was kosher or not. Kahn was several times asked to join one of two local temperance lodges, but, he told his brother, he “could not see it.” Most Jews steered clear of evangelical temperance reform, but at least some made their own non-alcoholic wine by soaking raisins in water and heating up the mixture.<sup>29</sup> The requirement to drink four glasses of wine during the *seder* meal and the stringencies around grain consumption made the issue of wine particularly important on Passover. This was because many imported wines were adulterated, mixed with water and prohibited grain-based spirits to increase volume and profits. New York



Jews could purchase kosher wine from merchants like Middleman, while in San Francisco in 1857 Jews could patronize a kosher-for-Passover restaurant that offered kosher wine, rum, and lunchtime meals.<sup>30</sup> *Matzah* for the holiday was procured from congregations or direct from big-city bakeries, which on several occasions created cartels to fix prices. At the same time, special charitable efforts were undertaken every year to ensure that poor Jews could receive *matzah* and kosher meat. The increased stringency on Passover turned unleavened bread into a hot commodity, a matter of both profit maximization and private philanthropies.<sup>31</sup>

Congregations lost their oversight over meat and *matzah* to nascent—and unreliable—markets, but they continued to collect the tools of worship and holiday observance. In 1857 a Jew from Grass Valley, California, boasted,

[We] purchased a *Sepher Torah* [Torah scroll], with the necessary appendages and also a *Shopfar* [ram's horn blown during the high holidays]. We have, too, a fine, well-fenced Cemetery with a substantial building on it, with all the implements required by our rites.<sup>32</sup>

Here and elsewhere, Jews pooled their resources to supply worship materials, most significantly Torah scrolls, which were large, elaborate, and handwritten by trained scribes on calf's skin. They were to be removed from their ark and read during morning and afternoon services on Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and holidays when a *minyan* was present. In the words of Walt Whitman, who visited a New York synagogue in the 1840s, Torah scrolls “resembled in shape large sugar loaves; and each had an ornamental and fantastic affair made of silver and glass upon its top.”<sup>33</sup> The first known scroll produced in the United States was sent from New York to New Orleans in 1849.<sup>34</sup>

Smaller Jewish communities that did not have the funds to commission such an undertaking purchased or borrowed scrolls from individual members, urban leaders, or European communities, although their plans often went awry. In 1847 Jews in Montgomery, Alabama, ordered a Torah scroll for the high holidays, but it was not delivered in time. They held services without it, making difficult, if not impossible, the proper

performance of a major obligation of holiday worship. Congregation Adas Israel of Washington, D.C., founded in 1869, relied on a congregant's Torah scroll until they could commission one from Europe, which was found to be defective and was replaced in 1874 by one purchased from a New York Hebrew bookseller.<sup>35</sup> The procurement of a Torah scroll was not always reliable, but neither was its proper use. In Quincy, Illinois, in the 1850s, difficulty getting a *minyan* meant that although there was "a room in the house of Mr. Herman, containing a scroll of the law . . . it is used only during the autumnal holidays." Even with Torah scrolls, other logistical challenges resigned these Jews to forms of worship that deviated from the *halakhic* norm.<sup>36</sup>

At the nexus of these issues of individual procurement and communal regulation, scarcity and authenticity were *etrogim*, citron fruits used every year for the holiday of Sukkot, both by congregations and by individuals. In 1866 there was an *etrog* shortage, as an early festival date and the length of steamer passage resulted in a shipment that arrived after the holiday. With the usual protocol for *etrogim* having failed, American Jews were able to obtain some from Corsica, which "although not very choice, brought fabulous prices."<sup>37</sup> To alleviate these issues, many wanted to use *etrogim* grown in the West Indies, which were much less expensive and more easily accessible than were those from the Mediterranean islands. Some, however, doubted their permissibility for ritual use, which depended on being grown on branches that were not grafted onto other citrus trees. A debate on the matter was published in Hebrew in the *Occident*, but it seems that most Jews who cared agreed with Leeser that they "had all the appearance of the imported Italian article."<sup>38</sup> While many Jews likely ignored it altogether, there were some willing to go to great lengths to procure the "real" thing. Still others were comfortable with expanding what counted when necessary or convenient.

Notions of Jewish authenticity also expanded in the realm of books. In 1846, upon leaving for America, Herman Kohn's brother-in-law gave him "an excellent religious book for your instruction" and told him to "make it your sacred duty to read one chapter on each Sabbath and holy day with serious devotion and meditation."<sup>39</sup> Although Jewish books were mostly imported, an indigenous American Jewish printing business emerged early on. Between the 1850s and the 1870s, according to one calculation, 1,731 Jewish books were published in the United States.<sup>40</sup> The two most

prominent publishing houses were partners of the major American Jewish newspapers and were based in Philadelphia and Cincinnati. Isaac Leeser of the *Occident* was particularly passionate about the creation and distribution of English-language Jewish books in the United States, and established a Jewish Publication Society in 1845, the same year that he published his five-volume Hebrew-English Pentateuch.<sup>41</sup> The enterprise published a periodical anthology called *The Jewish Miscellany*, secured 450 subscribers throughout the country, and eventually published fourteen English-language tracts. Its goal was that “literature of a Jewish kind might be diffused all over the land, at a cost so trifling that the poorest man might be able to participate in its benefits.”<sup>42</sup> Print materials, he believed, would remedy the dire religious consequences of American geography and economics.

Bloch & Co., founded in 1855 by Isaac Mayer Wise’s brother-in-law Edward, published Wise’s *Minhag America* prayer books, including its multiple reprints and its high holiday editions, his newspapers, and other books in Hebrew, German, and English. An 1869 list of books for sale included several German books and traditional Hebrew texts as well as Wise’s book *The Origin of Christianity* for \$1, Leeser’s revision of [*Imrei Lev*] *Meditations and Prayers for Every Situation in Life* for \$3, British Jewish writer Grace Aguilar’s *Spirit of Judaism* for \$2, and *Hours of Devotion: A Book of Prayers and Meditations for the Use of the Daughters of Israel*, translated from the German, for \$1.25.<sup>43</sup> Bloch, which described itself as “Importers and Dealers in Hebrew Books of Every Description,” also published documents for Jewish organizations, blanks of Jewish marriage contracts (*ketubot*), and a variety of Jewish books, both imported and written in the United States. By 1874 Bloch was being advertised as the “American Hebrew Publishing House.”<sup>44</sup>

Congregations were the biggest market for daily prayer books and other texts. The Jews of Davenport, Iowa, reported in 1873 that they had satisfactorily adopted *Minhag America* as well as Wise’s *Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties*; “We looked for years for such a book,” they wrote.<sup>45</sup> Some of the books marketed by these publishers and others seem to have been intended specifically for mobile Jews, far distant from coreligionists and wary of financial and physical burdens. For instance, Baltimore traditionalist Benjamin Szold’s *Israeliteish Prayerbook for Household Practice* (1867) included in one volume the liturgies for weekday and

holiday services, liturgies for weddings and circumcisions, the Passover *haggadah*, prayers for sickness and death, information on household religious life, songs, and prayers for children and for travel—in short, all possible Jewish needs.<sup>46</sup>

At least some Jews went to great lengths to procure Jewish books. Isaac Jalonick of Belton, Bell County, Texas, wrote to Leeser in broken English in 1853 requesting a copy of his biblical translation, and if possible, a *machsor* prayer book for the high holidays.<sup>47</sup> Others, however, were content to purchase non-Jewish books, including Christian scriptures. One example was Edward Rosewater, who deemed the Book of Mormon “a big lot [of] trash” after reading it in 1863; another was David Steinheimer, who in 1864 bought a pocket Bible produced by Miller and Burlock of Philadelphia. It was no more than four by two inches, had his name engraved and written on the edges, and contained the “Old Testament and the New; Translated out of the Original Tongues.”<sup>48</sup> Christian scriptures were far more affordable and widely available than the Talmud, the *Shulkhan Arukh*, or even Jewish sermons.

Also popular were works of history and literature in which Jews appeared. Found in the libraries of educated American Jews at the time were David Ramsay’s *Universal History Americanised*, which included an account of Jews, Henry Milman’s *History of the Jews*, Marie Joseph Eugene Sue’s novel *The Wandering Jew*, and *Pillar of Fire, or Israel in Bondage*, an 1859 novel documenting the Exodus story that was written by an Episcopal minister.<sup>49</sup> In one letter Philadelphian Rebecca Gratz noted reading both Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem* and *Mariamne: An Historical Novel of Palestine*, published in 1825 by Nathaniel Ogle, an Englishman who also wrote a manual for emigrants to western Australia.<sup>50</sup> Jews were omnivorous in their reading habits, using books by Jews and non-Jews alike for the formation of religious selves. Later in life Philip Whitlock remembered that his philosophy had been to “elevate” himself “by improving my mind and education in spending my pleasure time in reading,” not just Jewish books, but “all the standard novels and books of information that I would procure.”<sup>51</sup>

These reading habits were not only individual acts of creativity, but market choices that arguably hindered the development of Jewish book markets. Leeser’s publication society struggled financially and was unable

to survive an 1851 fire that destroyed its stock, although a new organization under the same name was launched in the early 1870s.<sup>52</sup> Leiser also faced competition through copyright infringement. In 1859 he successfully took Samuel Sklarz to court for selling in his store “a piratical edition of the plaintiff’s English translation [of the Hebrew Bible].”<sup>53</sup> Bloch & Co. was able to make it only because it diversified into non-Jewish newspapers and books as well as municipal jobs and developed a lucrative flag business.<sup>54</sup> Less successful was migrant Isidor Bush, who struggled and failed to make it in the Judaica business in the 1850s. He described himself as a “beginner who is fighting for his mere existence . . . [and with] insufficient speaking and writing knowledge of the English language.” He begged Leiser for help and eventually left New York for Saint Louis, where he acted as his agent. He soon was in debt to Leiser “for sold and unsold books of your publishing company,” and tried to settle up using “a magnificent Sepher Torah.” In addition to financial misfortune, he experienced straightforward fraud, having been cheated by a Mr. DeYoung, whom he had sold “a torah scroll and tallith [prayer shawl] for ten dollars plus a sixty dollar money order that could not be cashed.”<sup>55</sup> Bush learned the hard way, as had numerous congregations and entrepreneurs before him, that individual Jews could be just as unreliable as the objects they used and the logistics of procuring them, which of course only perpetuated those problems.

In the United States, Jews made decisions about everyday and festive objects within markets, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that were convenient but also uncertain. Many maintained increased scrutiny around particular times, spaces, and objects—for instance, Passover, the home, and meat—but they also developed more expansive material understandings that were easier to enact on the road. Non-kosher vegetarian food, beer at a wedding, or a book about Jews written by a Christian were now used to Jewish ends. While the details varied by object, one thing was clear: the stuff of Jewish life no longer functioned primarily as communal products. Now they were consumer choices based on individual intent more than legal obligation. This transformation was not an isolated one, but was embedded in new forms of social and familial life as well as new understandings of divine action.

## Visions of God

In 1833 a young woman told Joseph Lyons that he “was the most irreligious young man” she knew. In his own estimation, Lyons valued “religion [that] is the rational” and agreed, “Yes I have no more Bible religion than that log of wood.” When his friend Raphael Moses opened his store on Saturdays, however, Lyons disapproved, writing in his diary, “I am superstitious thus far as to believe that money made thus [with] the fruits of disobedience will never really profit a man.”<sup>56</sup> Moses’s simultaneous rationality and superstition were inconsistent but not unheard-of among nineteenth-century American Jews. In addition to its extensive system of religious law, Judaism also had a long tradition of theological reflection. God was understood as an active force in the world, rewarding and punishing His people Israel both collectively and individually. There were notions of an immortal soul that was sent after death to heaven (*gan eden*) or to hell (*gehinnom*), and a thoroughgoing messianism, which included belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead. Although the details were hotly debated, preachers, teachers, Torah and Talmud study, and the Hebrew liturgy all instilled these basics.<sup>57</sup> As they moved, however, Jews like Lyons saw God not only in traditional Jewish texts or authoritative sermons. Especially in moments when mobility threatened belonging and selfhood, they drew theological lessons from the places they went and the lives they lived.

In the United States, Jews could find Jewish worship and preaching (itself an innovation in synagogue life), but many more were far from rabbis and surrounded by enthusiastic, missionizing Protestants of various stripes. S. T. Levin of Columbia, South Carolina, wrote to Isaac Leeser for help debating a Christian minister on a particular biblical passage, Isaiah 53, which references a suffering servant interpreted by Christians as a prophecy of Jesus. “Not that I doubt for I am a Jew, a real Israelite in every sense of the word and proud am I of the name,” he explained, but his own brother-in-law, Isaac Wolffson of Charleston, had been converted on this chapter because there had been no one “who could sufficiently explain it as to prove to him that the construction he placed on it was false.”<sup>58</sup> Eliza Myers, who lived in the rural South, was the target of her own sister’s entreaties that she join her in converting to Christianity. She refused, describing her religious process thus: “I have read + I have reflected + I



shall continue to read + reflect.”<sup>59</sup> Reading, especially the Bible, was a major battleground for Jewish identity.

Leaders, authors, and editors did their part to stave off the missionary threat through the distribution of Bibles, books, and printed sermons, but many Jews sought religious knowledge elsewhere. Leeser in fact received complaints that “the Occident is very dull,” because it was heavy on “sermons + essays [which] are beyond [Jews’] comprehension.”<sup>60</sup> In 1868 a Jew from Vicksburg, Mississippi, wrote to Isaac Mayer Wise, “I think it would enhance the value of *The Israelite* considerably, if your readers would take the trouble to give you and us ‘their experience in religion’ once in a while.”<sup>61</sup> Mobile Jews increasingly sought theological knowledge in the materials of their everyday lives. They invoked the particularistic God of Israel, but they also deployed conceptions of God as Creator of nature and humanity and as Providential force dictating individual trajectories.

In the early 1840s, peddler Abraham Kohn lamented to God in his diary, “Thou alone knowest of my grief when, on the Sabbath’s eve, I must retire to my lodging and on Saturday morning carry my pack on my back, profaning the holy day, God’s gift to His people, Israel.” Kohn’s God—found in rural New England—was the God of Israel whom Jews were commanded to serve through punctilious legal observance. Jewish peddlers who neglected prayer and the Sabbath, he argued, “forget completely their Creator” and “So long as one lives as we do here his thoughts cannot be with his Creator, his religion cannot be observed, his life cannot be virtuous or even happy.”<sup>62</sup> In June 1864, as the Civil War raged on, Emma Mordecai expressed her belief in “my peculiar duties as an Inheritor of law given to us by Him who said ‘I, the Lord, change not.’” She argued, “Blind & foolish are those children of Israel who persuade themselves that the laws given to them by the Unchanging One, for them & their descendants to observe forever, are not binding on them.”<sup>63</sup> These Jews criticized their coreligionists, arguing that God demanded observance of Jewish law above all else.

A more general “God of Israel” was regularly invoked in Jewish institutions and in writings and rituals surrounding death. Synagogue buildings especially were described as “a house for the God of Israel,” “an edifice to the God of Israel,” or “consecrated to the services of the Holy



One, the God of Israel.” One congregational president, likewise distinguishing his synagogue from other houses of worship, described it as a place where Jews could “worship the God of Israel according to the dictates of our conscience.”<sup>64</sup> Obituaries, wills, and eulogies invoked a similar conception of the divine. When his friend Abraham Marks drowned in Nashville in 1870, merchant Lazard Kahn “implore[d] the Eternal God of Israel that he may strengthen [his family],” continuing, “Let us thank Him, our heavenly father, for his kindness and mercy and for his sake let it strengthen our devotion unto him as Israelites as his chosen children.”<sup>65</sup> In these moments, Jews’ relationship to God was linked to their membership in Israel, whether as a matter of belief or of familial inheritance.

Alongside these ongoing invocations of the God of Israel, many mobile Jews came to understand God as Creator of nature and of humanity more generally. Kohn, who decried the threat of mobility to Jewish observance, also found divinity in nature, writing in 1842, “The sky is clear and cloudless, and nature is so lovely and romantic, the air so fresh and wholesome, that I praise God, who has created this beautiful country.”<sup>66</sup> During a coach ride from Philadelphia to Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1833, Simon Gratz Moses had likewise marveled, “Who can look on that glorious orb [the sun], shedding light + heat upon millions, and not be convinced beyond a doubt of one all great + all powerful creator.” He added, “Nature never fails to awaken such thoughts as these within me.”<sup>67</sup> Jews found spiritual meaning not only in the land that God created but in their gendered duties and their intellect. Eliza Myers described her family responsibilities as a sacred task, writing, “I have not forgotten my Creator—but I cannot but believe that I serve him best by performing my earthly duties as well as I can.” Furthermore, she “appeal[ed] to his mercy for forgiveness if I err even in using the reason he has given me.”<sup>68</sup> Lazard Kahn, who appealed to the “Eternal God of Israel” in his friend’s eulogy, also believed that “we must all continually endeavor to improve ourselves intellectually, morally + physically. These are the greatest homages we could offer to our Creator.” This improvement required not adherence to Jewish law per se, but a more general self-cultivation that could be pursued on the road.<sup>69</sup>

Mobile Jews were particularly adamant about God’s ongoing activism and interest in their daily lives. In 1842, when Louis Stix and a Jewish

traveling companion narrowly avoided being swept away in the Little Miami River, the companion “returned to the city for the purpose of going to the temple to give thanks for his deliverance, as is the custom with Orthodox Jews when their lives have been spared from a threatening catastrophe.”<sup>70</sup> Jacob Friedman, a man in desperate financial straits, insisted, “God led me to make up my mind to come to America.” He wrote to Isaac Leiser that if he helped him, “then God will send a blessing upon your home and repay you double and add to your years in good health.”<sup>71</sup> These Jews remained committed to ritual expressions of providential belief—through the *Gomel* thanksgiving prayer—and to traditional understandings of divine reward and punishment, but many others developed providential understandings that were more universal and more vague.

Typical was Sarah Gratz Moses, who wrote to her uncle Benjamin Gratz in 1836 that she “look[ed] to Providence for a kind protection and support through all the changes + chances which in our shortsightedness we cannot + I would not wish to foresee.”<sup>72</sup> If the Creator made people, Providence could help give a boost when their purpose or essence was threatened. Union officer Marcus Spiegel wrote to his wife from Louisiana in 1863, “I have passed through dangers, perils, privations and hardships, and yet with the help of a kind Providence I am still hale, whole and hearty.”<sup>73</sup> Providence attended to the smaller stakes of American life as well. In 1867, following a family wedding, Rosa Levi Newmark of Los Angeles wrote, “I am very thankful to our Heavenly Father that he has been so gracious to us, if only my blessed Edward’s knee was well, and my loved Carrie’s eyes, and if we only all lived in one city.”<sup>74</sup> Spiegel said no *Gomel* blessing, and the Newmarks proposed no good deed to bring about their wishes, but they still insisted on the divine direction of their lives.

Providentialism was rooted in Jewish theology but also helped explain and soothe amidst disjuncture, confusion, uncertainty, and separation. Of moving from Boston to Baltimore, Haiman Spitz remembered,

It was very hard for us to break up home and business in Boston and part from brothers and sisters and friends; but such is life. We cannot have what we wish; only that which is ordained for us.<sup>75</sup>

Providence oversaw relocations and the vagaries of the life cycle. In 1870 Moses Greensfelder wrote to his sweetheart, Carrie Levi, invoking a Jewish story about the post-creation occupations of God: “Matches are made in heaven says an old proverb, certainly if they prove to be good ones. But be the above true or not, I certainly believe in destiny in this matter as well as in most all things.”<sup>76</sup> In 1873 Abe Weiner wrote to his sister of their deceased mother, who had been deathly ill several years earlier, that “God alone gave her yet another year of happiness, we should feel thankful that God was so good to her and also that he did not inflict long suffering on her.”<sup>77</sup> Providence bestowed blessings and consoled amidst disaster, acting as both matchmaker and angel of death.

Like other Americans, mobile Jews were particularly interested in the afterlife, where far-flung friends and relatives “shall meet again . . . in joy and prosperity.”<sup>78</sup> Lazard Kahn interpreted death and the afterlife in more traditional Jewish terms, insisting of his friend that “his early death would be a reminder to his friends to live as true Jews,” so that “when death calls us away to appear before Him [it will be] with our garments spotless and ourselves fit to” enter the next world.<sup>79</sup> While for Kahn, one’s fate in the afterlife was linked to proper Jewish observance, Abe Weiner drew a different lesson from death. The deceased, he insisted, acted as “guardian angels in heaven,” who continued to love them from their new “home that knows no grief and sadness.”<sup>80</sup>

Amidst a proliferation of thinking about death, some Jews developed notions of heaven that had little to do with Jewish ideas about the afterlife and the world to come. Raphael Jacob Moses believed “that a Supreme intelligence controlled the world,” and by the time he wrote his memoirs in the early 1890s, he showed evidence of a long-term dabbling with Spiritualism. He believed that “there was no death and that the dissolution of the body was but the transition of the soul or mind . . . [and] that those who loved us and guarded us on earth continued to love and care for us after they have passed away.” He had regularly turned to his mother’s spirit for guidance throughout his life, which had “been my strength and support in many a trying hour.”<sup>81</sup> Mobile Jews who believed that God oversaw everything also believed that He would enable familial reunion in death if not in life.

While Moses's Spiritualism seems to have been rare, most Jews did believe that there was some larger benevolent force dictating the course of their lives and their eventual afterlife in a domestic utopia, whether it was fate, destiny, or Providence. With people and places moving rapidly in and out of their lives, Jewish understandings of God became increasingly expansive and universal. Even those who adamantly clung to the distinctive God of Israel also embraced God as Creator and Providential force, perceivable in the nature that surrounded them and in the events that shaped their mobile lives. These portable religious beliefs, while hardly unique, helped Jews to navigate the heartaches and hopes of life in nineteenth-century America. But they did not remain individual or private for long. Rather, they raised new questions about—and encouraged new interpretations of—the rooted practices that the God of Israel had commanded.

### **Spirits and Forms**

On the road, American Jews responded to scarcity and uncertainty by transforming their understandings of Jewish objects and of the Jewish God. These developments were parallel but also intersecting, and they found their way into settled communities as well as lonely outposts. Once material practice depended on the intention of the consumer and God operated in an active but nebulous fashion, the relationship between the two had to be reconsidered. Increasingly common was the philosophy of Moses Greensfelder, who wrote in 1870, "'Tis in the spirit not in the form. And the Jew that eats ham and doesn't fast on the day of Atonement and keeps his store open Saturday and goes to hear a Unitarian minister on Sunday is no less a Jew . . . providing he acts upright and honest."<sup>82</sup> Informed by their new, more expansive material and theological understandings, many Jews came to question the numerous Jewish commandments that were, in any event, difficult to verify or enact.

They found their champion in Isaac Mayer Wise, whose travel and correspondence kept him up-to-date with the Jew on the street, and whose goal was to find common ground among as many American Jews as possible. Wise's approach, some have argued, was inconsistent, but it was undoubtedly flexible and pragmatic. It would, in changing normative

Judaism, better align it with what Jews were actually doing. Wise complained in 1858 of people who

theoretically consider all ceremonies, forms, doctrines and principles of the self-same holiness and obligatory nature . . . while practically they admit, it being impossible to live up to the religious observance of former days, every Israelite must be a sinner.<sup>83</sup>

The answer, according to Wise, was to change the rules in order to emphasize that which was doable and meaningful. For instance, Wise omitted mentions of wine use altogether in his *Minhag America* prayer book, and though he described the holiday of Sukkot as a commendable thanksgiving day, he argued that “the tabernacles and the festive wreath (Lulab and Esrog) have no meaning whatever for us.”<sup>84</sup> Other, more traditional rabbis also affirmed the eclectic practices of their congregants. At Baltimore’s Oheb Shalom, Rabbi Benjamin Szold gave his approval to the practices of eating in non-kosher restaurants and traveling on the Sabbath.<sup>85</sup> During the Civil War, Bernard Illowy granted his congregants permission to use lemons instead of *etrogim* during Sukkot, but only as a remembrance of the commandment, without the normal blessings.<sup>86</sup> These rabbis elevated accessibility and continuing Jewish identity above legal punctiliousness.

Rebecca Gratz, the native Philadelphian who founded the first Jewish Sunday school, described her theology in an 1840 letter to her Protestant sister-in-law in Kentucky: “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart & with all thy soul & with all thy might’—in public & in private—the bible and all Jewish books I have ever seen teach the same.”<sup>87</sup> While Gratz lived her whole life in Philadelphia, she witnessed the mobility of her far-flung family and of those entering and exiting her hometown. Quoting the central *Shema* prayer, she made Judaism a matter of universal love, the Bible, and “Jewish books.” This approach did not lead Gratz to reject Jewish law, however, but rather to confirm it on new grounds. Describing the holiday of Sukkot, she acknowledged that “at this period of the world [it] is called ‘superstitious,’” yet she invoked its subjective meaning, arguing that it “has to me such a different bearing that I can hardly

understand how a Jew can consider [the laws] oppressive or consent to forego them.”<sup>88</sup> In 1869 “Yehudi” (who had warned about fraudulent kosher butchers) likewise offered a new justification for traditional practice. He argued that the rules of *kashrut* “are eminently wise and scientific; and while some of the minutiae may be without any meaning, they, on the whole, ought never to be disregarded.”<sup>89</sup> Where subjective meaning was lacking, objective benefit would do. Even Leeser pursued this course of expanded religious authenticity. He cited the scriptures and ancestral custom as the basis of Jewish law, and at least once he argued on behalf of circumcision by appealing to free choice rather than *halakhic* obligation. Every child, he insisted, should “have the option of being an Israelite or not when it arrives at maturity. And what right have parents to stand in the way of their son’s future prospects, by neglecting to initiate him in the Jewish church?”<sup>90</sup>

Rabbis and leaders, then, helped to concretize inclinations and orientations that had emerged out of the context of mobility and that came to be aligned with Reform and Orthodoxy, respectively. The modernizing impulse of American Reform had emerged in Charleston as early as 1824, with the creation of the Reformed Society of Israelites, although that effort was folded back into its mother congregation, Beth Elohim, by 1840. Wise became its main proponent, supported by many dyed-in-the-wool German Reformers and new American devotees alike. The term “orthodox” was applied to traditionalists by Leeser as early as 1845 and spread among those who were committed to *halakhic* observance in spite of its difficulties.<sup>91</sup>

Many Jews avoided these labels, however, and consciously sought out the center position. Correspondents denounced “the extremes . . . [of] icy-cold and burning-hot,”<sup>92</sup> as well as “Ultraism,” which led leaders “to become either hiper-Orthodox [*sic*] or Deists if not half atheists and leaves but few in the happy medium.”<sup>93</sup> In 1855 A.P., “a man without rabbinical learning,” argued that the orthodox had little real piety and “labor[ed] much to preserve the rubbish heaped against the wall, because it has lain there so long,” while the radical reformers wanted “rather to re-model than to reform, to make a sort of new Judaism.”<sup>94</sup> Writing from Boston, he described his religious orientation as “tak[ing] the plain text of Scripture as my guide, aided by what portion of common sense the Great Giver of all has seen fit to bestow on me.” Most Jews likewise believed that they



could figure out God's will on their own, apart from religious authorities or sectarian labels.

Undergirding the opinions and assumptions of these moderates were a set of distinctive geographic, legal, and economic conditions. Able to move throughout an expanding continent, Jews confronted loneliness, scarcity, and uncertainty by embracing new modes of Jewish life. Amidst this chaos, some Jews would join congregations and others would not; some would marry Jews and others would not; some would keep kosher and others would not; and some would perceive God as mandating *halakhic* observance, while others would see divine will as requiring only good behavior. But most valued the sentimental family; were subject to market negotiations in their culinary and literary selections; turned to congregations to locate worship and life cycle resources; believed that God had created them and remained active in their lives; and perhaps most importantly, understood religious life as a matter of individual authority and free choice. Despite new ideological formations, intellectual purity ultimately lost out to pragmatism, neither Reform nor Orthodoxy proving more consistently enacted in messy lives than had traditional Judaism.

\* \* \*

Mocking the ascendant reform position in 1861, Rabbi Samuel Myer Isaacs of the *Jewish Messenger* wrote,

Because science does not see the reason why an Israelite should not indulge in so rich a culinary delicacy as bacon, the positive injunction in Holy writ "is opposed to the spirit of the age" and may be disregarded with impunity. Because the superior wisdom of modern times has failed to discover in the decalogue any mention of street railroads, of course it is perfectly right to employ one of those useful vehicles in going to and from the Synagogue.<sup>95</sup>

Isaacs was right to identify new rational, Bible-centric standards of Jewish authenticity, but he did not see that similar intellectual tools were being used to support observance as well as reform. He was also unsympathetic to the pressures of life in a mobile society where bacon was cheap and



cessation of work on the Sabbath both inconvenient and economically challenging. Tellingly, Isaacs's article was entitled "Is Reform a Success?" and many subsequent American Jewish historians have answered in the affirmative, debating only whether it was primarily a European import or an American congregational development. As the preceding three chapters have shown, however, American Reform did not emerge independently, particularly coherently, or in the synagogue alone. Rather, it was one product, along with orthodoxy, of mobile Jews who were grappling with religious life on the road, through the law, and in the market.

American Jews worked to create permanent social institutions that they hoped would aggregate Jewish resources and stabilize Jewish life. Many coreligionists remained outside their walls, however, developing their own mobile forms of thought and practice. Though certain times, spaces, and rituals were subject to increased scrutiny, for the most part Jews came to believe that the intent of the individual and the effect of the product or practice mattered more than precise *halakhic* status. It was universalism, individual choice, and the sentimental family that came to dominate American Judaism, not Reform per se. These situated strategies were not exclusively or inherently Jewish or non-Jewish, religious or secular. They could confirm, conflict with, or expand upon the particular, obligatory, and communal modes of traditional Judaism. They were, however, undergirded by belief in a God who on some level chose the Jews, but whose primary role was to accept their everyday foibles and idiosyncratic choices on an unruly new continent.

## **Part III**

### **Creating an American Judaism**

## A Congregation of Strangers

### The Mobile Infrastructure

In his debut sermon in New Orleans in January 1850, the Reverend James K. Gutheim declared himself “a stranger before a congregation of strangers!” Recently arrived from Cincinnati, he nevertheless insisted,

There is no stranger in Israel; for those who scarcely saw and conversed with each other are united by the firm bonds of our holy faith and although I come among you a stranger from a great distance, yet we are inspired by a unity of religious sentiments and hopes.<sup>1</sup>

Gutheim’s rhetoric was more hopeful than accurate. In a huge, mobile country, Jews were not only living as biblically inflected “strangers in a strange land” relative to other Americans; they also regularly described themselves as “strangers to each other.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, unfettered mobility had produced unwelcome side effects of mistrust, scarcity, and anonymity. These worried individuals but also raised broader concerns among an emerging cadre of Jewish leaders about the fate of Judaism in America. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise worried that “in a course of twenty years we [will] not recognize each other any longer as Jews” because “not only each congregation, but each individual [will have] his own and peculiar reforms.”<sup>3</sup> Jewish leaders not only diagnosed these problems but tried mightily to cure them.

In the absence of government-supported religious communities, leaders had to pursue other means of creating the “firm bonds” that Gutheim described. Treatments of nineteenth-century American Judaism tend to focus on the rise of new organizations concerned with philanthropy, political advocacy, or religious reform. In reality, however, the hallmark institutions of the day—the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, the Board

of Delegates of American Israelites, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations—were rooted in and contributed to a broader mobile infrastructure of American Judaism.

In seeking to manage religious life, they relied upon new technologies of American political and social life. Amidst unprecedented expansion and unwieldy diversity, the U.S. government was working to knit the nation together, supporting the rapid expansion of railroads and an increasingly effective postal service, sending Supreme Court justices traveling on circuits, and redoubling efforts to collect accurate census data.<sup>4</sup> These measures, along with the popular press, national institutions, traveling lecturers, and a burgeoning economy of paper documents, promised to overcome the diversity and uncertainty of American life, but they often exacerbated them.<sup>5</sup> Jewish leaders borrowed these tools toward their own religious ends, and they faced some of the same pitfalls. For Jews, as for the American nation, “Union” was not as singular in practice as it was in theory.

The goal of the mobile infrastructure was to transform strangers into friends. It began with efforts to circulate information through correspondence, travel, and the press, and gradually came to include bureaucratic institutions. Jewish leaders used these to encourage worship, rabbis, congregations, and national unity, and they succeeded in establishing these as standards of American Jewish life. Yet they also found that the mobile infrastructure could be used to transcend and contradict its stated goals. In the process, they cast American Jews as a national population, not only or primarily a denominational membership.<sup>6</sup> This could be seen in a range of projects and media, but especially in plans for circuit preaching, rabbinic credentials, and statistical collection. Despite their well-documented disagreements, American Jewish leaders like Isaac Mayer Wise and Isaac Leeser shared a common interest in managing the unknown Jews scattered across the continent. The national religious institutions they created were not inevitable, nor were they the most significant organizational outcome of the nineteenth century. Rather, they were products and causes of a more thoroughgoing project of connection in the face of mobility.

### **“Strangers among Brothers”**

In 1844 Isaac Leeser offered his own theory of Jewish community:

[Our] souls are linked together by the ties of consanguinity in faith, by the union of the same religion, which regards the Creator as the common head of the Israelitish race, under whatever government they live.

He acknowledged the many divisions among American Jews, and yet insisted that “all Israelites should be living in harmony and friendship.”<sup>7</sup> Although he argued for the irrelevance of government, Leeser’s terminology of friendship was an American one, used to describe diverse political and economic alliances in his day. Friendship argued for social cohesion apart from agreement or proximity, while, for Jews, drawing on the Talmudic idea that “all of Israel are friends.”<sup>8</sup> This was a common strategy among American Jewish leaders, to insist that Jews were “friends” and “brethren” united by “the religion of our fathers.”<sup>9</sup> It was intended to correct for the fact that in the United States, it was difficult to find or to verify coreligionists. American Jews were in fact “strangers,” a broad categorization that encompassed a range of fraught social, institutional, and economic relationships, and that a new mobile infrastructure would seek to overcome.

Leaders were especially worried about young Jewish men who were estranged from religious life, whether on purpose or by happenstance. These included men married to non-Jewish women, those living far from other Jews, and, most disturbingly, those who denied or ignored their religious identity altogether. Such men, Leeser argued,

show no outward love for the faith of [their] fathers, never associate in [their] homes with those who believe in Israel’s God, and are often ashamed to be recognized as belonging to the hated race.<sup>10</sup>

While Jewish identity and affiliation could not be coerced from such men, it could be coaxed. This was accomplished most successfully by Jewish fraternal orders, which trumpeted their goals in mottoes of “Benevolence, Brotherly Love, and Harmony” and “Friendship, Love, and Truth.” In the

face of anonymity, formal election and initiation made the “brotherhood” of fraternal orders into a uniquely stable form of relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Brotherhood was not limited to local communities, but spread across the continent. The 1858 constitution of the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith—which had been founded in New York fifteen years earlier—claimed that it had “taken upon itself the task, to unite the Israelites of the United States and of North America in such a manner as to soonest further the development of the highest interests of Judaism.” A member of one lodge was to be received by any other lodge throughout the country and treated “the same as if he were one of her own members.”<sup>12</sup> Lodges in different cities communicated with one another and with their district grand lodge, were visited by traveling leaders, and congregated at regular District Grand Lodge meetings. In 1865 Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, then the president, or Grand Saar, of the order, poignantly described arriving in Milwaukee and seeing, “through the still falling rain, unknowing and unknown, a brother Israelite, to convey me to the hall of the Brotherhood of the Order of Benai Berith.”<sup>13</sup> Unlike congregations, B’nai B’rith linked men unambiguously to their fellows throughout the continent.

If brotherhood was one form of relationship that traveled well, newspaper subscription was another, connecting far-flung Jews to one another and to editors. Sam Goldstone wrote to Wise from Shasta, California, informing him that “although a perfect stranger, believe me to be Your true friend.”<sup>14</sup> Editors brought such Jews into contact with religious knowledge and information, printing sermons, editorials, and responsa. Leiser argued that the *Occident* was “a means of bringing religion home to many who otherwise might have remained strangers to it.”<sup>15</sup> Wise wrote in 1856 that religious indifference had “vanished to reappear no more, as long as the *Israelite* continues its weekly lessons.”<sup>16</sup> The pages of the *Occident*, the *Israelite*, and other Jewish publications were also filled with information about far-flung communities. The goal of American Jewish periodicals, as “A Southern Jew” described it in 1843, was “not only in advocating and elucidating our holy faith, but in collecting and disseminating information of ‘the dispersed of Israel.’”<sup>17</sup> This would help Jews locate congregations, but also combat the very real fear that “each little assemblage of Jews will proceed in its own way of action, regardless of what other communities may say or do.”<sup>18</sup>

Editors solicited and printed lengthy “Domestic Record” sections and travel writings. In one representative issue of the *Occident* from 1855, there were reports about Jewish life in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Portsmouth, Ohio; Saint Louis; New Orleans; Lafayette, Louisiana; and La Pointe, Michigan. These accounts shared demographic and institutional information, congregational resolutions, and local events.<sup>19</sup> For instance, in 1854 Nathan Abraham of Norfolk, Virginia, responded thus to a request for information: “We have no synagogue of our own, but have rented a house to this purpose and also for a school-room, where our young are instructed in Hebrew and other branches. We have a burial-ground of our own.”<sup>20</sup> Some writers seemed to think that if their locale did not appear in the Jewish press, it was as if they did not exist. In 1870 a Jew from Chicago wrote to the *Israelite* complaining that “hardly any notice of us and our doings appears in” American Jewish newspapers, which “may induce the belief among our brethren abroad that we are inactive here.”<sup>21</sup>

To write these accounts was to announce one’s community and add it to an emerging map of American Jewry; to read them was to acquire new and possibly helpful information and to gain a glimpse into the lives of coreligionists elsewhere. Wise described such reports as intended “for the instruction and amusement of our readers,” but they were also, in the words of Leeser, to “prompt good-will and unity among all Israelites” by “furnish[ing] a connecting link to distant congregations [and] by informing them of the passing events in which all are interested.”<sup>22</sup> One Dakota Jew reported in 1869, “In my solitude the Jewish papers (I read all of them) keep me in connection with the Hebrew community. I read and imagine to be a member of society.”<sup>23</sup> The press helped Jews know about and feel connected to Judaism, to local Jewish communities, and to one another.

Wise and Leeser further cultivated bonds of friendship—and their own celebrity—through travel. “I am better known to the Israelites of America, by personal intercourse with men of all classes and of nearly every city, than any other now or before living,” Leeser wrote in 1852, because “I have been privileged to address more various congregations.”<sup>24</sup> Though usually associated with their homes in Philadelphia and Cincinnati, respectively, Leeser and Wise traveled incessantly, both locally and on longer trips, whether to raise funds, sell subscriptions, give lectures, or consecrate synagogues.<sup>25</sup> Wise’s congregation in Cincinnati even resolved



upon his election “that this Congregation could feel highly pleased and honored to see the Rev. Gent[leman] extend his beneficial influence by lecturing before other Congregations whenever he should desire.”<sup>26</sup> Both Leiser and Wise saw travel as part of a larger project of familiarization and revitalization. They gave sermons and met with local leaders wherever they went and wrote extensive descriptions of the places they visited, often including their suggestions for improvement. For instance, Wise criticized the Hebrew Benevolent Societies of Saint Louis in 1856: “why six? two would be better.”<sup>27</sup> Such comments defined what was right and wrong for Jews elsewhere, even as they implied that Jewish communities had a common path and shared goals.

Both men reported that while they entered new towns as strangers, they left as friends. Upon visiting small towns in Pennsylvania in 1849, Leiser reported, “we can never forget the hospitality and kindness we enjoyed during our stay of four days among those whom we met as strangers and parted from as friends.”<sup>28</sup> On a stopover in Wheeling, Virginia, in 1855, Wise visited local Jews, and, “though [I was] a perfect stranger, we found warm and obliging friends.” Looking back on his early travel, Wise noted in his *Reminiscences* that although at the time he had been disappointed by a lack of tangible results, he had “won the personal friendship of many influential men and women.” Friendship was “not only pleasant, but very important” to the enactment of American Jewish life.<sup>29</sup>

While B’nai B’rith membership, newspaper subscription, correspondence, and travel all required some financial expenditure, more direct transactions with coreligionists created another class of strangers. Poor, “friendless” Jews, especially those who were itinerant, were served by Jewish charitable and benevolent associations, hospitals, and orphan asylums; “the poor are our brothers,” their organizers insisted.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, unknown *hazanim* were hired by congregations to facilitate religious life. According to Leiser, congregations “engag[ed] men of whom they know nothing, except that they call themselves Rabbi, doctor of divinity, doctor of philosophy, or master of arts.”<sup>31</sup> In dealing with these strangers, congregations found that it was not always easy to distinguish brothers and leaders from *shnorers* (a Yiddish word denoting someone who takes advantage of others) and frauds.

Leaders used correspondence and the press to warn about unworthy—and even non-Jewish—individuals who were fooling Jewish charities and congregations. In 1855 Isaac Oppenheimer wrote from Rock Island, Illinois, warning against a Dr. Listenheim, who claimed to be a needy recipient of charity and a pious old *hazan* acquainted with Isaac Mayer Wise, “but after having received considerable aid, and seeing that his hypocrisy was detected,” he had converted to Christianity, “thinking to make a living by that without working.”<sup>32</sup> This problem was exacerbated by mobility, as indigent Jews moved from town to town. Max Lilienthal noted that in San Francisco in 1876, “several leading members of these charitable associations complained that we of Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis are sending all the ‘schnorrers’ out to San Francisco.”<sup>33</sup> In larger cities, overarching institutions were created to deal with these issues, like the United Hebrew Charities of New York and of Philadelphia and the United Hebrew Relief Association of Chicago.<sup>34</sup> These and other institutions imposed new philanthropic standards intended to guard against direct exploitation. Money would not be given, in Leeser’s words, without “raising the character of the recipients of charity through a proper discrimination,” and requiring Jewish worship and education, especially for children.<sup>35</sup>

The problem of possibly fraudulent *hazanim* was even harder to solve. In 1866 “Mordechai” from Vicksburg wrote to Wise, “Twice we have been deceived by pretended ministers.”<sup>36</sup> Without overarching institutions to guarantee a candidate’s qualities, congregations relied on information gleaned from the candidate himself and from others. In the application he mailed to Congregation Sherith Israel of San Francisco, A. Hahn noted that he was “personally a stranger to you,” but had “heard from a gentleman from California that your congregation wishes to engage a preacher.”<sup>37</sup> Many applicants sent writing samples to prove their erudition, and carried with them diplomas and letters of recommendation. Some used degree signifiers to prove their credentials, most flamboyantly, E. B. M. Browne, known as “Alphabet” because he followed his signature with “LL.B., A.M., B.M., D.D., M.D.”<sup>38</sup>

Increasingly Wise and Leeser became confessors and arbiters of slander, fraud, and integrity. *Hazanim* and congregations alike sought the approval and aid of Leeser and Wise, who in their newspapers advertised functionaries and congregational openings and held forth on the character

of particular men. In 1853 Gershom Kursheedt, a New Orleans lay leader, sought Leeser's advice about a candidate for religious leader: "I want to know from you entre-nous if he is a safe man."<sup>39</sup> Rabbi Elias Eppstein of Milwaukee wrote to Wise when considering positions in Hartford and Baltimore, "request[ing] him to give me his private opinion about the cong[regation]." Though unable to send his credentials, which were in the possession of his current congregation, he insisted that "by the Jewish press he knows that I am an acknowledged Rabbi."<sup>40</sup> Through their letters and newspapers, Wise, Leeser, and a few other prominent leaders came to stand in for other kinds of official credentials.

On a fast-moving continent, local affiliations were not enough for mobile men, for uncertain congregations, or for confused charities. While B'nai B'rith functioned relatively smoothly across the continent and charities mostly satisfied themselves with local coordination and reform, leaders worked continuously to incorporate and coordinate lone Jews and independent congregations. Leeser and Wise in particular became central hubs and emerging authorities, circulating information and making connections across the country. The resulting mobile infrastructure turned lone unknown Jews into subscribers, correspondents, acquaintances, and friends, which they hoped would approximate and pave the way for more thoroughgoing and official connections.

### **Preaching, Credentials, Statistics**

In discussing the situation of Jews in the United States in 1848, Leeser indicated what was to come, writing that the "population has increased; new men and able teachers have come as laborers into the field; the harvest is ample; and the question is . . . 'How are we to employ our materials?'"<sup>41</sup> Having begun to collect and disseminate information through travel and the press, leaders like Leeser increasingly turned their attention to three projects: traveling preachers, rabbinic credentials, and statistical collection. These, they believed, would create stable forms of Jewish life, moving interactions beyond the uneven and sporadic bonds of friendship and occasional communication.

At one point all three major Jewish papers agreed that traveling ministers should be sent around the country. Leeser was especially

enthusiastic, as was Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York's *Jewish Messenger*, who published a rousing editorial series entitled "We Want Missionaries."<sup>42</sup> Drawing on the example of Protestant itinerant preaching, Jewish leaders hoped to combat religious lethargy and rival evangelization, at the same time building on their own ad hoc travel and on a history of itinerant Jewish preachers, or *maggidim*.<sup>43</sup> Initially Leeser proposed sending preachers from an "ecclesiastical board" to "travel through the length and breadth of the land and rebuke sin wherever they see it," exerting religious authority even in communities with a minister. By the 1850s, however, the emphasis shifted toward geographical connection.<sup>44</sup> In April 1854, Wise asked in the *Asmonean*, "Why can not we have travelling ministers to preach to such congregations who have no ministers? If we had such Judaism would prosper much more and congregations could be organized much faster."<sup>45</sup> Regular contact among far-flung individuals and communities would lead to religious edification and improvement.

There were also new plans to formalize the hitherto ad hoc credentials of rabbis and religious functionaries. As Wise succinctly put it, "scholars are wanted, and no quacks"; Jewish leaders undertook to ensure that the two could be distinguished.<sup>46</sup> Leeser originally advocated a regulatory body, which would, among other tasks, "examin[e] candidates for the ministry."<sup>47</sup> The more popular route, however, were plans for a rabbinical college that would train as well as evaluate candidates. Wise insisted, "We must have a place to teach or to examine our teachers, ministers, and rabbis that the outrageous imposition now practiced on congregations be forever stopped." By 1848 there were 113 colleges in the United States, most of them Protestant. Wise entered into this fray with his short-lived Zion College, which opened in the fall of 1855.<sup>48</sup>

Jewish leaders also worked to standardize the collection of what they called "statistics," meaning the collection of geographic, historical, and demographic information. The American Statistical Association had been founded in 1839 and by 1850 the U.S. census had taken on a decidedly expansive, centralized, and scientific character.<sup>49</sup> Amidst this flourishing, Leeser and Wise took local reports very seriously, frequently asking of subscribers in various places, "will not our friends . . . favor us with such statistics as may be accessible to them?"<sup>50</sup> Individual functionaries maintained circumcision and marriage records and there was interest in news and information about Jews around the world, but the exigencies of

American life lent the accumulation and spread of internal information particular urgency and utility.

“Go where you will, you will find an absolute ignorance of the condition of the Israelites in the neighborhood even, nay of those in the very place where you happen to make the inquiry,” Leeser wrote, enviously asserting that “this circumstance will not be met with in any other religious denomination in the country; for they all have statistics.”<sup>51</sup> Having begun to collect rudimentary statistical information through the press, Leeser and other Jewish leaders sought to expand and improve their efforts.<sup>52</sup> Leeser suggested as early as 1852 that “the respective officers of the congregations throughout this country” send him their data, “that we may be able to publish hereafter a complete table of all the localities of the various Synagogues in the country, so accurately designated that strangers could readily find them.”<sup>53</sup> Four years later he published an article called “Congregations” that boasted of Jewish “worship in more than a hundred and ten localities.” He then “endeavor[ed] to count them up, without pretending to be accurate,” listing by state the names of cities with Jewish communities.<sup>54</sup>

American Jewish leaders were increasingly convinced that American Jewry could not be connected and unified through informal communication alone. Now they used it to encourage more formal plans of collecting and distributing information. Traveling preachers would establish rabbinic travel in order to keep distant Jews close to Judaism, colleges would build on networks of reputation and correspondence to make functionaries identifiable, and statistics would expand local reports to ensure awareness among communities. These measures, they hoped, would turn strangers into friends by improving access to preaching, rabbis, and congregations. The plans were generally seen as uncontroversial and benign, but for Jewish laypeople they were never fully convincing, and for Jewish leaders they were never fully satisfying.

## **Unions and Disunions**

In June 1841, two years before he began publishing the *Occident*, Isaac Leeser wrote a proposal for a “union of all Israelites residing in America.” This institution, he argued, would

counteract the deplorable state of want of proper observance and promote a due knowledge of the blessed religion they have received from their fathers . . . [through] a common and united effort, that which would evidently be beyond the power of accomplishing by any one of the small congregations in which the Israelites of this country are divided.<sup>55</sup>

Such a union was the deepest hope of Leaser, Wise, and other leaders, who saw it as the best way to eliminate the various forms of estrangement that mobility had wrought on Jewish life: Jews without formal affiliation, religious leaders with uncertain identities, and a dizzying array of Jewish practices. A single institution would standardize Jewish life and, most importantly, unite all Jews throughout the continent. Ultimately, however, leaders would find that the same technologies that made American Jews into friends could also turn them into enemies.

In 1844 Leaser suggested “a FEDERATIVE union, which leaves every Synagogue or every city perfectly at liberty to manage its own internal affairs.”<sup>56</sup> In spite of this rhetoric, however, the formalized union that Leaser and others imagined was a shifting amalgam of religious and political goals. It constituted a funhouse mirror version of a European *Gemeinde* or consistory, a Jewish institution that maintained exclusive religious authority within a given geographical realm. In an 1848 article entitled “Union,” Leaser argued that what was needed was “a committee of men selected by the universal voice of Israelites in all parts of America,” a national representative body, “in whom the people have the confidence to refer questions concerning Judaism.”<sup>57</sup> Jewish leaders proposed various forms of religious authority—a synod, a Jewish court, or *bet-din*, and even a chief rabbi—but continued to describe their proposed institution as a “union” of all Jews within the boundaries of the United States.<sup>58</sup>

Leaser insisted that it was a “misconception” to think that “there were a sectarian difference between our divisions as there is among Christians,” and yet infighting and division flourished, within, among, and across communities.<sup>59</sup> In October 1855 Wise succeeded in assembling a group of men in Cleveland with the goal of union in mind, but many boycotted the event, and even beforehand, “manly skirmishing” was under way among



“men of quite different opinions and views.”<sup>60</sup> The rabbis at Cleveland managed to issue a basic platform affirming belief in the Bible and the Talmud, which was intended as a conciliatory measure. Many Jews objected to their claims of authority, however, and the resolutions stoked considerable controversy. The meeting’s one major outcome was the publication of Wise’s *Minhag America* prayer book, which had the goal of encouraging at least a common liturgy throughout the nation.<sup>61</sup>

In 1859 Leeser and his allies succeeded in founding the Board of Delegates of American Israelites—which modeled its name on a British Jewish body—the first real attempt at a national Jewish institution apart from newspapers or fraternal orders. While its direct cause was the Mortara affair, an international case of anti-Semitism, it was an outcome of much older conversations about the quality of Jewish life in America. The Board of Delegates would advocate for Jewish causes at home and abroad, and while it indicated that it would not interfere in congregational affairs, its founding documents included a tentative proposal “to introduce if possible, a uniformity in conducting the service in the synagogues.”<sup>62</sup> Whatever the desired outcome, however, the underlying goal was to correct “the absence of all combination of our corporate religious bodies.”<sup>63</sup> The editor of the *Jewish Messenger* described the Board of Delegates as “a measure, calculated to introduce more intimate relations between these scattered communities” by reviving “that bond of brotherhood—that fraternal feeling, which ever bound together by the dearest tie the Israelites of days gone by.”<sup>64</sup> The Board of Delegates of American Israelites was later joined by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), which was first proposed in 1871 at a conference that likewise promised to “make friends of men from distant places.” Its founders described its goal as “to preserve and elevate Judaism,” which required that “the congregations must be united organically and systematically.” They expressed special concern for “our brethren in the country far away from Hebrew congregations.”<sup>65</sup> When the UAHC was finally created in 1873, its founders, a group of laypeople allied with Wise, presumed, as had the founders of the Board of Delegates, that national unification would lead to some kind of shared religious path.

In these unions, friendship and brotherhood were to be established through congregations and shared forms of worship. The Board of Delegates’ plan of organization called for “two delegates to be elected



from each congregation,” with no mention of benevolent societies, which in many places were the only Jewish institution.<sup>66</sup> The UAHC made its exclusions clear in its very name. A Jew from Victoria, Texas, objected in 1875, “I think that if all societies like ours, in a place where no congregations exist were to join the Union, it would help the cause a great deal.”<sup>67</sup> At least some Jews thirsted for national affiliation, and saw societies as parallel to congregations, but they found that they were considered ineligible, second-class organizations.

If informal communication and nascent projects had bequeathed the Board of Delegates and the UAHC with a congregational focus and a national scope, they had also paved the way for disagreement and division. Wise had claimed in 1854 that the *Israelite* “is a religious paper, but not a sectarian or sectional one,” but in many ways it was both.<sup>68</sup> The pages of Jewish newspapers were filled with information, but also with divisive polemics about synagogue reforms. In 1858, for example, Wise described Judaism in Baltimore as “the most nonsensical kind of sham orthodoxy,” and Leeser described reformers as operating on “dangerous ground.”<sup>69</sup> He worried in 1863, “We all have witnessed the sectarianism among our Nazarene neighbors, with their endless variety of views and practices. Some of us have boasted that we have no sects among us. It was indeed true in the main thirty years ago. But is it so now?”<sup>70</sup> Leaders increasingly found that American Jews were simply too diverse to hold together in one voluntary association.

American Jews disagreed about reform, but they also lived in very different parts of the country. In the aftermath of Cleveland, Wise and his allies had seen themselves as battling “our opponents in the East,” both traditionalists and radical reformers.<sup>71</sup> In August 1863, as the Civil War raged, Wise continued to argue that “it is impossible almost to effect a union with our eastern contemporaries,” who were opposed to reform and union.<sup>72</sup> If Wise accused his eastern opponents of sectionalism, many charged him with the same. Radical reformer Solomon Sonneschein of Saint Louis objected to the heavily western composition of the UAHC, insisting, “A Union of American Israelites without the Eastern Congregations reminds me of playing Hamlet without Hamlet himself!”<sup>73</sup>

In 1873 the *Jewish Messenger* published an article speaking out against the UAHC, which the author referred to as “the Cincinnati Union.” The

editor argued that in a true union, “points of the compass will be ignored and American Jews [will] forget the rivalries or jealousies of North and South, East and West.”<sup>74</sup> So widespread were such accusations that in 1876 the *Israelite* published an article entitled “Is the Union of American Hebrew Congregations a National or a Western Organization?,” which included a tabulation of the number of member congregations by state.<sup>75</sup> The Board of Delegates, based in New York, and itself vulnerable to accusations of an eastern bias, likewise listed member congregations by state and city in its minutes so as to mark and prove geographic diversity.<sup>76</sup> When the Board of Delegates and the UAHC merged in 1877, the agreement included a clause that “in order to avoid any possibility of undue influence to either section of the country,” the executive committee would include fifteen members from the Eastern Seaboard, with “the other fifteen from the other states and territories.”<sup>77</sup>

B’nai B’rith also had disagreements, regional rivalries, and arguments about governance, ritual, and the boundaries of membership. But when a disagreement occurred, the Constitutional Grand Lodge was involved, a General Assembly was held, and petitions were submitted. The structures in place in B’nai B’rith ensured that there was a good deal of regional autonomy and equality as well as fair outlets for complaining about the rules. There was room for diversity and clear means of adjudication when conflicts arose.<sup>78</sup> In 1864 Wise had described the success of the order thus:

All attempts to cement a union of American Israelites on the basis of voluntary adherence failed decidedly. . . . If you can do it by public means, do it. The order does it by means which prove efficient. If one contemplates the disunion of congregations in one and the same city he must admit that this order performs wonders.<sup>79</sup>

It was not only the secrecy of the order that fostered its success, however, but its regional structure and clear lines of authority, which helped mediate the divisive tendencies that ravaged the other unions. A B’nai B’rith circular in 1866 argued that “what congregations have failed to do, the Order may accomplish [because] *it is not sectarian in any of its aspects.*” By 1877 the order had grown to seven grand lodges, 271 lodges, and

20,000 members, out of an estimated American Jewish population of 250,000.<sup>80</sup>

In 1868 Wise wrote, “I know no reform congregations, Judaism and all of its congregations are for me an inseparable and untouchable whole,” and although,

to a certain point every congregation has a right to develop freely . . . I want one united Israel, the reform efforts are merely a means to re-establish unity under the pressure of the times and stormy circumstances.<sup>81</sup>

For him and for Leeser, creating a standardized Judaism for all American Jews was the primary goal, although it was ultimately an impossible one. Eventually, the UAHC would become an exclusively Reform sectarian institution. National institutions would be premised not on Jewish identity alone, but on the membership of Jews organized around narrower commonalities like gender, religious proclivity, or politics. But the phantom limb of unaffiliated individuals would remain. It would be a constant reminder of a national Jewish population that, despite its resistance to institutionalization, was undeniably a cultural construction, an object of analysis, and a target of intervention.

### **Transmitting Judaism**

Even as the struggle for a singular union failed, the mobile infrastructure continued unimpeded within and outside the new institutions. The first stated objective in the 1859 inaugural proceedings of the Board of Delegates was to “obtain all kinds of statistical information respecting American congregations and to have the same duly recorded.”<sup>82</sup> Its founding documents also called for the creation of an “educational establishment for the training of American Jewish youth, to qualify them to become ministers of congregations” and mentioned “raising a fund in order to send ministers to speak in such synagogues where they have no one who can expound to them the word of God.”<sup>83</sup> Traveling preachers, rabbinic credentialing, and statistical collection continued, then, to be advocated by American Jewish leaders who were determined to transcend

the voluntary membership of their own institutions. While these projects would eventually come to realization, early on they were hampered by their reliance on the very laity whom the men behind these projects were trying to manage. Rabbis and *hazanim* wanted Jews to be dutiful members, but with their limited authority and weak infrastructures, they had to rely on them to act like faithful friends, volunteering support and activism out of personal if not institutional loyalty.

The Board of Delegates began its efforts with statistical collection. In 1860 it created a questionnaire to determine the location and origins of every congregation; the names of its ministers and officers; the number of total members, male and female; whether there was a school, its number of students, teachers, weekly meetings, and average attendance; the names of affiliated institutions; and the number of births, deaths, and marriages in the past year. It also asked, “what other Congregations exist in the vicinity” to cover those that did not respond.<sup>84</sup> Despite their high hopes, however, relying on individual congregations to report data proved imprecise at best. Within the next year survey data had been received from only 40 of the 160 congregations addressed, and “the returns have been so imperfect as to prevent their being of practical advantage.”<sup>85</sup>

Despite this setback, however, statistical collection gained renewed attention following the Civil War, alongside other organizational endeavors. In the late 1860s B’nai B’rith tried to create an American Jewish University, and Isaac Leeser briefly ran Maimonides College before his death in 1868.<sup>86</sup> Many of his ideas lived on, however, in part through his old comrade and rival Wise. Indeed, Wise played a key role in the 1871 meeting that initiated the UAHC. Its first item of business was a “committee on rabbinical college and the course of study to be pursued therein,” followed shortly thereafter by the establishment of a committee for Jewish missionaries, now rebranded as “circuit preaching.”<sup>87</sup>

This last project gained steam into the 1870s, although leaders disagreed on the issue of who would carry it out. The ideal was to hire full-time circuit preachers, although there was a limited number of English-speaking ministers and they were committed to their own congregations. Wise argued that the entire scheme rested on the fate of the rabbinical college, and excoriated his colleagues who took vacations instead of volunteering their services.<sup>88</sup> Following its official founding in

1873, the UAHC created a special committee on circuit preaching, which proposed “the formation of theoretical congregations from the Hebrew inhabitants of several cities or towns connected by rail . . . [who could] engage one preacher.”<sup>89</sup> In 1876 a new committee “warmly endors[ed] the original plan” and endeavored to “define the circuits for circuit preaching.”<sup>90</sup> Whereas earlier the most significant stumbling block to the creation of a missionary system had been finding willing ministers, now it was the issue of financial responsibility and geographic territory. Later that year ads were put in the Jewish press, addressed to “the Congregations throughout the United States, who desire to avail themselves of the benefits of Circuit-Preaching.”<sup>91</sup>

Many small-town Jews wrote in to the *Israelite* declaring their enthusiasm for the project. Max Meyerhardt of Rome, Georgia, wrote in 1877, frustrated that no action had been taken on this most important matter. If circuit preaching were institutionalized, he insisted, indifference would be vanquished and “the old love of Judaism would be rekindled in a thousand hearts and new congregations would spring up, as if by magic, all over the land.”<sup>92</sup> Despite such enthusiasm, circuit preaching had a slow start. “It remains now to be seen whether the Israelites dwelling in remote places desire to have the word of God preached before them and their families,” Wise wrote in 1877, “or whether they wish to remain isolated.”<sup>93</sup> Whereas congregations eagerly invited Leeser, Wise, and others to visit their communities, in the face of an impersonal bureaucracy declaring their inadequacy, they were not so eager. Without the power or resources to enact this plan from the top down, the project was stuck at a plateau between the old ad hoc networks and the institutional programs to come.

Concerns about rabbinic credentials also continued to be expressed within national institutions. Marcus Jastrow, undertaking a last-ditch effort to reorganize the Board of Delegates in 1875, proposed the appointment of a “Committee of Ministers for the examination of applicants for the ministry.”<sup>94</sup> A year later, at the third annual council of the UAHC, a proposal was put forth requiring congregations to hire only ministers whose credentials had been entered with the executive board. Its sponsor argued that this measure “would save the Congregations from any chance of being imposed upon, and also protect the rabbis from the perils of slander.” The proposal was declared by the committee to be “inexpedient,”

and it was again defeated the next year, likely by congregations satisfied with their uncredentialed *hazanim*.<sup>95</sup>

Lay leaders were unwilling to cede local control, but they did embrace the idea of a rabbinical college that would prepare future rabbis for their American constituents and ensure that they would be reliably credentialed. Upon agitating for a new college in the 1870s, Wise specifically noted that it would “easily stop this abuse” of fraudulent and unqualified religious leaders, “by conferring certain well defined titles and degrees.”<sup>96</sup> The college would end the problem of unknown ministers, ensuring that they were learned and qualified. Despite general agreement about the aims of the college, there was debate about its eventual location. The *Asmonean* expressed hope “that our children will at no distant day see an Israelite college in every state of the Union,” encouraging local identities, but Wise retorted, “We hope we shall at no great distant day see one grand and complete Israelite college for all states of the Union.”<sup>97</sup> Wise extended his principles of unity to this institution and continued to advocate for Cincinnati, even though a lack of support outside the city had doomed Zion College.<sup>98</sup> By the 1870s, there was enough communal willpower to settle for one college located in Cincinnati. The final push came from Henry Adler, whom in 1873 Wise had convinced to donate \$10,000 toward a college, which had to be established within the next three years.<sup>99</sup> Adler’s donation letter described it as “under the direction of three or more congregations of this or of the places of the West,” although rabbis and other leaders insisted that it was a national institution.<sup>100</sup> The college was the first program to succeed because it did not rely entirely on consensus or local activism, but the assertive funding of one individual.

In 1876 the Board of Delegates’ Committee on Statistics asked the UAHC to collaborate on the work of statistical collection. The UAHC approved a committee of three to work with the board and deemed it “eminently fitting that a record of our people should be compiled for future reference.”<sup>101</sup> The joint committee created a questionnaire and circular, which they sent to three hundred congregations, and though they only received replies from a bit over half, they assembled and organized it by state into a “directory of probably nine-tenths of all the congregations in the country with the names and addresses of their presidents and secretaries and of prominent Jews in places where there are none.” This directory helped equate, compare, and share information among diverse



congregations, and it added 25 percent to the self-reported population “for places not heard from and for individuals scattered through the country.” The final count was a national population of around 240,000 Jews, served by 174 congregations, fourteen institutions, fifteen publications, and four fraternal orders.

Hoping to be even more inclusive, the committee recommended that a “circular and blank form (not necessarily so complete or expensive as the one we have used) should be prepared and sent to every town in the United States where a Jew resides.” Thus the UAHC completed the transition from qualitative bottom-up to quantitative top-down data collection, from counting communities to individuals, from attempting local description to congregational directory to national demographic account. The goal was “to publish [and distribute] the statistics when completed in pamphlet or book form.”<sup>102</sup> Without an apparatus able to undertake a conclusive statistical survey, however, they relied on the imperfect data of local Jews, even and especially if they remained outside institutions. As with circuit preaching, far-off urgings were less compelling than organic activism, and few were as eager to fill out impersonal forms as they were to offer detailed local information in the press.

Despite the initial unreliability of lay support and activity, by the late 1870s, the mobile infrastructure was firmly in place. Leaders had built on the community that correspondence, travel, and the press had fostered and used new institutions to both fund and fuel its projects of connection and rationalization. In July 1874 the newly established UAHC voted unanimously to create Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, which formally opened in October 1875 and graduated its first class in 1883.<sup>103</sup> Six years later, after the initial creation of eastern and southern rabbinical associations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis was founded, in which rabbis from throughout the country would band together to regulate their own standards and credentials.<sup>104</sup> In 1881 the UAHC published the results of the first American Jewish census, and in 1895 it established a system of circuit preaching.<sup>105</sup>

Drawing on new technologies, these projects expanded the availability of Jewish resources and knowledge, even outside institutions. They diminished the possibility of ministerial fraud and total individual or communal isolation. Jewish life had been marked by “strangers,” lone



individual Jews, religious functionaries of eclectic backgrounds, and relative independence and improvisation within communities. American Jewish leaders worked to change this, and they succeeded in instituting particular expectations of religious life. Judaism outside a congregation and large cities, with religious leadership of varied and nontraditional training, and without publicity or quantifiable comparison was marginalized, although never totally eliminated or excluded.

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Unfettered mobility created a range of problems for the functioning of Jewish life, allowing individual Jews to fade away into a mass of strangers, rendering rabbinic employment an opaque and sometimes fraudulent enterprise, and making it difficult to know exactly where Jews were, let alone what they were doing. Identification, credentials, and information through travel and the press seemed too diffuse, voluntary, and premised on non-expert discernment, and so Jewish leaders worked to formalize them in a series of programs and institutional endeavors. Their ultimate goal—order and certainty through what Leeser once called “a fusion of the elements in one homogenous mass”—would prove untenable, but the mobile infrastructure that fueled the dream of union would also outlast it.<sup>106</sup> Centralized information and bureaucratic technologies—print culture, travel, education, social sciences, and national institutions—would be enshrined as hallmarks of American Jewish life. These encouraged standards like congregational membership, professional leadership, and authoritative information, but could not enforce them.

Indeed, the mobile infrastructure left no doubt that “bad” Jews were still part of the community and in fact offered them alternative vehicles for Jewish identity and practice. That Jewish newspapers insisted on the importance of congregational membership, for instance, did not diminish their power as means of belonging for unaffiliated Jews. The specter of the Jewish “stranger” continued to haunt precisely because he was included in the “imagined community” that had been forged through communication and travel since the antebellum era.<sup>107</sup> Whether strangers became brothers, friends, or enemies, they came to be understood as fellow American Jews, members in an amorphous but palpable “congregation of strangers.”

## The Empire of Our Religion

### The Mobile Imaginary

On October 9, 1851, M. Markwell wrote to Isaac Leeser from Berlin, Wisconsin, “You will undoubtedly be pleased to hear that in the backwoods country there were, on the Day of Atonement, a few of our people assembled to praise the Lord on high.” Thirteen local Jews had met at the home of a Mr. Kusel, who was squatting on recently acquired Menominee Indian land, Markwell boasted: “the land is not even sold yet to actual settlers; and still in that wilderness here a few of God’s chosen ones assembled to praise His name.” Leeser reprinted the letter in the *Occident*, adding his own editorial gloss: “who will not be interested in witnessing the fact of the planting of our glorious standard in lands where but lately roamed the savage and resounded the war-whoop[?].” He encouraged his correspondent and his compatriots to continue in their efforts, ending with the prayer “may He be with you in your outgoing and incoming, as He was with our fathers when they went forth in the desert to be his chosen people.”<sup>1</sup>

This was a story, like many others in this book, of far-flung Jews creating community and identity on the road. They did not create a congregation, purchase a burial ground, or hold weekly Sabbath services—and indeed, we do not even know the exact format of their “praise”—but the framing of the event, first by Markwell and then by Leeser, imbued it with both political and theological significance. They were not lonely Jews engaging in imperfect religious practice, but imperial pioneers and biblical wanderers, bringing Jewish community to an empty “wilderness.” While it is tempting to read this as an example of outsize antebellum rhetoric or Protestant imperialism, both Markwell and Leeser were doing real intellectual work, together helping to construct an emerging mobile imaginary of American Judaism.

At the core of this imaginary was a fundamental conflict of American life. Jews were for the first time included in a national project—that of westward expansion—but it was one that seemed to be destroying Judaism’s extensive legal and communal practices. After all, Sabbath breaking, intermarriage, non-kosher diets, and other violations of Jewish law and custom were rampant. As we saw in the previous chapter, leaders tried to resolve some of the problems of mobility by casting Jews in relational terms—as brothers, friends, or members—and by linking them in an institutional union. In their quest to reconcile Judaism and American life, however, they grappled with problems not only of community but also of worship and practice. In so doing, they drew on a constellation of ideas, including providential geography and agrarian utopianism as well as motifs of the heart, empire, and progress. European Jews used similar concepts, but within internal Jewish conversations and along combative denominational and factional lines.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, the context and tenor were much more expansive and conciliatory. These images were used to insist on the constancy of Jewish identity and the vitality of Jewish institutions in the United States broadly, presenting as inevitable an American-Jewish synthesis that ultimately never was and arguably never could be.<sup>3</sup>

The mobile imaginary was primarily a means of stabilizing and strengthening Judaism through engagement with the various ideologies and practices of Manifest Destiny. In many ways, this was the political discourse of unfettered mobility, promising the realization of God’s plan for the United States’ expansion throughout the American continent. While Manifest Destiny certainly contained Protestant ideas and was promoted by powerful Protestant individuals, Jews generated this discourse for reasons that were parallel to those of their Protestant neighbors. As Americans deemed white, they too were to replace the Spanish Catholics and Native Americans who had previously ruled and occupied the land.<sup>4</sup> They benefited from Manifest Destiny and they applied its language and concepts toward their own religious ends, mixing and matching it with Jewish diasporic and messianic traditions.

Most historians describe American Judaism in this era as a battle between Reform and Orthodoxy that had little intellectual heft. Isaac Mayer Wise, Isaac Leeser, and others, they argue, were either drawing directly on European thought or staging bids for acceptance and

respectability.<sup>5</sup> In fact, American Jewish thought in this period was much more robust and complicated than has been appreciated. In the absence of authoritative rabbis and definitive *minhagim*, or geographically determined rites, American Jews engaged in sustained reflection that, if not original or systematic, was important in defining the scope and nature of Judaism in the United States.

The mobile imaginary worked in several modes in its quest to make Judaism and American mobility compatible. In different moments, it shifted from arguments that one or the other had to change to claims of their inherent compatibility, and it engendered new conceptualizations of Jewish identity and community that could unite but also divide. It was spearheaded by Wise and Leeser and was used by other Jewish leaders in a variety of press genres, ranging from overarching editorials, thanksgiving addresses, and sermons to travel accounts, consecration addresses, and even correspondence. Unearthing this intellectual tradition demonstrates that understandings of God and religion were not limited to sectarian polemics and sermonistic writings, nor were they separable from the material and political facts of American mobility. Leeser's description of the Berlin Jews—as both planting an imperial standard and wandering in the biblical desert—was one example of the mobile imaginary at work. It drew on political and religious language to argue for the compatibility of mobility and religious order. Even as sectarianism began to flourish along fault lines of belief and practice, it was rooted in this more lasting conceptualization of Judaism as a matter of institutional development and individual identity above all else.

### **The Jewish Pastoral**

American Jews supported and benefited from the project of westward expansion, but religious life in new territories was less than secure. As Leeser wrote in 1852,

If the people [of California] were only settled once, in the respective towns, and they purposed ending their days there, and not regard themselves as mere roving sojourners and

homeless adventurers, we should soon hear of many and permanent communities being formed.<sup>6</sup>

Anonymous Jews were moving far from coreligionists, Leeser complained, disappearing into America either by choice or by default. Religious resources were difficult to access, leading to gross deviations from traditional practice, and new Jewish communities were both unstable and inconsistent. How, then, to make sense of both the glorious opportunities available to Jews and their questionable religious effects?

Some Jewish leaders questioned the specific social conditions of American Jews, arguing that new residential patterns were needed for an unchanging Judaism to flourish. For instance, they reflected on the relative merits of the city and the country, drawing on a growing genre of American writings on travel and geography.<sup>7</sup> Though he was a resident of the bustling western city of Cincinnati, Wise described the country as a glorious environment rich with religious and economic potential for Jews. “I feel, that man would be much better,” Wise wrote, if people did not “sit in their large cities and forget nature and nature’s God.”<sup>8</sup> Leeser too indulged in such romantic visions, but he was also a fierce critic of Jewish dispersion, noting in 1857 that “[Judaism] is capable of a uniform adaptation to all states of society; but all these states are not alike favorable to its growth.”<sup>9</sup> In particular, he insisted that “a Jew in the *country* is usually nothing but a heathen in nine cases out of ten.”<sup>10</sup> Perhaps, leaders speculated, it was particular American places that harmed Jewish life.

They also wondered whether the problem was not the location but the terms of Jewish settlement. In the very first volume of the *Occident*, in 1843, Julius Stern proposed that Jews become independent farmers with their own state in the Union. The problem was, in his mind, that a “considerable number of our people has indeed come to this country, but without a common plan . . . and every one, therefore, was obliged to rely upon himself.”<sup>11</sup> Stern’s plan drew on emerging ideologies of communitarianism, the belief that society could be improved through the creation of small-scale experiments in collective, usually agrarian, living. Between 1805 and 1855 a hundred such experiments were undertaken in the United States, including ones with religious motivations like the

Oneida Community and the Mormons. The idea had been raised among American Jews a few times, reaching various stages of execution and always failing, but the advent of the Jewish press created a new medium and audience for its consideration.<sup>12</sup>

Leeser printed Stern's piece but argued that a state was the wrong goal, since apart from the fact "that it is not very likely that a sufficient number of Jews would settle in any one district . . . we ought not to desire it if we could succeed." He argued that until the ingathering to Zion, Jews would be best served by local communities and the protection of American laws.<sup>13</sup> Pragmatism and messianism trumped communitarian longings, then, although Leeser continued to discuss the issue with various correspondents throughout the 1850s. He believed that such projects would be materially prosperous and that "our religion also would be better observed, had we a population whose tasks would be different from the one which requires constant exertion and permits neither rest nor quiet"—namely, peddling.<sup>14</sup> If a group of Jews undertook farming together, they could "keep the ceremonials of our religion fully as well as in the cities."<sup>15</sup> Unlike most European and later American agrarian plans, which argued for farming as a path to Jewish reform and integration, these emphasized the possibilities for traditional observance. Separation and settlement, Jewish communalists believed, would create a more stable religious life. Although few of these plans got off the ground, many continued to argue that a Jewish colony, replete with *hazan*, *shochet*, teacher, and other synagogue accouterments, "might set an example of devotion to our faith in the western hemisphere."<sup>16</sup>

This critique of Jewish life in the United States used contemporary social thought to encourage traditional Jewish observance. It maintained the integrity of Judaism itself while contemplating an alternative configuration for its practice. More influential and successful than this critique, however, was an emerging insistence on the suitability—and indeed, the divine blessing—of Judaism in its new environment. When reports reached Isaac Leeser in 1849 that a congregation had been formed in San Francisco, he was overcome with emotion: "there where formerly no Jew could dwell under the rule of the abominable Inquisition, the Lord One has been invoked in the assembly of the faithful."<sup>17</sup> In contemplating mobility, especially at moments of institutional development, Leeser and others drew upon Jewish history while also indulging in the popular anti-

Catholicism and Native American erasure associated with American expansionism. Echoing the Jews of Berlin, the Reverend Moses N. Nathan, in his 1852 Galveston consecration address, asked,

Who, half a century ago, would have ventured to say, that on this verdant prairie, which once resounded with the war-whoop of the Indian . . . the name of the Eternal God of Hosts would be invoked by Israelites, in the primitive tongue.<sup>18</sup>

Westward expansion was “emptying” America’s vast spaces of persecuting Catholics and heathen Native Americans, not only for the United States but for God’s name and for Judaism. Jews, no less than their Protestant neighbors, took this imperial expansion for granted, ignoring the bloody wars and violent exploitation upon which it depended.

These accounts constituted a Jewish take on the American pastoral ideal, which celebrated the advancement of railroads and industrial technology into the pristine wilderness.<sup>19</sup> The Jewish pastoral ideal, however, cast the American environment as the novelty, a glorious if incongruous setting for an unchanging, if vague, Judaism. In 1852 Joseph Shannon, president of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, declared,

How thankful ought we to be to the God of our forefathers who has watched over and guarded our people through the wanderings of eighteen hundred years and has made us the humble instrument of planting the cherished faith of our fathers upon the shores of the Pacific.<sup>20</sup>

Jewish mobility was interpreted as a result of American expansion as well as of Jewish history and divine Providence. When Wise welcomed Jewish activist Dr. Gabriel Riesser to the United States in 1856, he encouraged him to “wander over our virgin soil, breathe our undefiled air. . . . This is the place where the bird found a house.” This metaphor borrowed from analogies in Proverbs and Psalms, comparing the protection of the United States to that of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> Wise insisted in 1860, “His providence steadily watches over the destinies of the people chosen



to bear the standard of divine truth to the remote parts of the earth.”<sup>22</sup> While older traditions had associated Jewish dispersion with the punishment of a divine Providence, or presented the post-exilic God as mournful and vulnerable, for Wise and others, a benevolent God had blessed Jews by placing them throughout the United States.<sup>23</sup>

This pastoral not only allowed Jews to express latent beliefs in Manifest Destiny and Jewish messianism, but also proved a strategic tool for convincing one another that Judaism and the American environment were perfectly suited for one another. The result was an overarching optimism that absolved Jews of responsibility for their geographic location and religious observance. They were no longer individuals whose choices encouraged or hindered religious practice, but agents of Providence whose utterances of Hebrew prayer alone bespoke Jewish flourishing. This ideal was not without its tensions, however. In an 1858 sermon, New York rabbi Morris Raphall described America as “the house that Providence has assigned to us—the dwelling-place which we have deliberately chosen, because, rich or poor, here we are free.”<sup>24</sup> Sixteen years later Rabbi Henry Vidaver of San Francisco’s Sherith Israel repeated this sentiment almost verbatim: “To many of you [America] is the habitation which Providence assigned unto you; it is the home which after many years of weary wanderings you have deliberately chosen for yourselves.”<sup>25</sup> The logical gap between choosing and being assigned a dwelling place, between agency and providence, was purposely overlooked.

Even as they cast American Jews as passive agents placed by God, leaders could not deny that they were also shrewd economic actors whose dispersion was a result of individual choices and was of questionable religious benefit. It was the awareness of this troubling individualism that led Jews to question the social arrangements of American Jewish life, although many of the very same people propounded the pastoral ideal of Judaism flourishing in the wilderness. Belief in both the beneficence of the American environment and the unchanging nature of Judaism was hard to maintain, however. Aware that Jews could not be swayed from their residential choices, leaders promoted new understandings of Judaism as a social form and a set of practices.

## **The Heart and the Empire**

In the same article where he lamented “roving sojourners and homeless adventurers,” Leeser admitted that “we occasionally meet, in the public papers, with some evidence of the kind, which proves that the Jewish heart is true, though so many display not the spirit of ready obedience which the law demands of Israelites.”<sup>26</sup> In spite of their concerns, Jewish leaders like Leeser wanted to retain and celebrate far-flung Jews and to inspire them as agents of Jewish life, no matter how imperfect. If Judaism was to flourish unchanged in the wilderness, it would require new understandings of identity and community that were expansive, optimistic, and, most importantly, portable. Amid mobility, anonymity, and excessive diversity, Jewish identity was made into a matter of the invisible heart and Judaism recast as a mobile and triumphant empire. These concepts had notable Protestant and European pedigrees, but American Jews used them for their own purposes, couching them in their own language of messianism and diaspora. Leaders and thinkers thus read Judaism into people and situations where “ready obedience” to its laws was not immediately clear.

The equation of religious identity with the sincerity of the heart had a long and storied history in the Western intellectual tradition and flourished in nineteenth-century America.<sup>27</sup> For mobile Jews, especially, it was helpful as a way of claiming identity because it needed no resources or institutions. The nature of the “Jewish heart” varied, at turns indicating charitableness, hospitality, love of family, or faithfulness, but it implied a pure essence: “the Israelite’s heart is right, however unseemly at times his exterior may be.”<sup>28</sup> After all, throughout their history of wandering and within mobile America, Jews “sojourned among the gentiles, conforming outwardly to their manners and customs, whilst the heart within throbbed unitedly with all, who, like [them], believed in the same God and obeyed the same law.”<sup>29</sup> Rendered an internal essence, Jewish identity could flourish in the face of anonymity.

There were older rabbinic traditions invoking the heart as a measure of loyalty and goodness and contemporaneous discussions of the “Hebrew heart” in Europe, but in the United States it was used in distinctive ways.<sup>30</sup> Jewish leaders seized on the heart as a way to make Judaism internal, individual, and separated from learning, community, or even commitment. As the *Jewish Messenger* wrote in 1861, “We are Jews, ‘pure and simple,’” and no matter where or when, “we have the same identical *religion*—whether we are strict or lax observers of it, is another question.”<sup>31</sup> Wise

insisted, with a less regretful tone and more of a sense of agency, that “Judaism is forgotten nowhere, warm hearts bend everywhere on its behest.” Even in places with no Jewish institutions and only a smattering of young opportunity seekers, he insisted, “neither distance nor new circumstances can tear the creed of our fathers from the hearts of their sons.”<sup>32</sup>

Appealing to hearts was the goal of the rising Jewish ministerial class. Wise wrote of wanting to make an “impression . . . on the hearts” of his listeners, and Leiser wondered in 1866 of foreign-born religious leaders, “can they speak to the hearts of their audience and sympathize even with their moral and intellectual deficiencies?”<sup>33</sup> As Jewish preaching flourished, the heart became a familiar motif on Sabbath mornings, so much so that in 1875 Isaac Friedman was reprimanded by Congregation Sherith Israel of San Francisco for threatening to cut out the heart of Reverend Vidaver following his Passover sermon. Witness Julius Patshek confirmed this to the congregation’s investigative committee, recounting, “Dr. Vidaver speaks so much about the heart, Mr. Friedman said I would like to see his heart.”<sup>34</sup> Here the pervasive metaphor of the heart was taken to its logical if grisly conclusion.

The heart was a way to retain a notion of identity stronger than formal affiliation, practice, or belief. As Wise wrote in 1877, no matter the locale, “it is the manifest destiny of the Hebrew to remain a Hebrew forever.” He thus made the fate of individual Jews as momentous and preordained as that of the American nation. He continued, assuming a male subject, “It is manifest destiny, which no man and no body of men can overcome. By your physiognomy, by your moral and intellectual qualities, by that nameless something in your nature.” Unable to control the movement, residency, or actions of Jewish bodies, leaders made Judaism inherent in their innermost depths, rendering it fundamentally mobile and impossible to excise.<sup>35</sup>

Leaders tried to rein in religious diversity, apathy, and dissension by describing normative Judaism as a banner or standard that represented a monolithic and expansive “empire of our religion.”<sup>36</sup> In his inaugural sermon in New Orleans in 1850, the Reverend J. K. Gutheim declared that “it is easy for the scattered members of our household, wherever the banner of our religion is once unfurled, to gather under its folds, to dwell

together in peace and harmony.”<sup>37</sup> Two years later, consecrating the Galveston burial ground, the Reverend Moses Nathan of New Orleans wondered aloud about future historians for whom “curiosity will naturally be excited to ascertain who first unfurled and raised the standard of Judaism in this section of the West.” Analogizing Judaism to empire and then to slavery, he prayed, “May we anticipate here the spread and growth of our peculiar institutions.”<sup>38</sup> If empire was a model of self-sufficient governance and unity across space, the comparison to slavery, “the peculiar institution of the South,” made religion a proud and naturalized factor, akin to region, in governing difference in custom.

The Torah had long been seen as a portable homeland brought by Jews wherever they were driven, but in the United States, the notion expanded to portray the tradition in general as a conquering force.<sup>39</sup> Notions of empire made Judaism into a project, requiring effort, but uniform and able to settle anywhere. Education and religious leadership, for example, were needed to encourage “the planting of our glorious standard” in new places and to ward off missionaries who “induce our own brothers to forsake the standard of Israel.”<sup>40</sup> In 1860 the *Jewish Messenger* described Judaism as “intended to confer happiness on all who place themselves beneath its banner.” Even so, the article insisted, “that bliss can only be obtained when they conform to the rules and regulations of the collective body.”<sup>41</sup> Judaism was cast as a banner, but it was also analogized at various points to a tree, a monument, and a tent, making it a matter of nature, of commemoration, and of masculine adventure.<sup>42</sup> All of these examples sought to harmonize Jewish and American narratives while exhorting Jews to religious action.

The motifs of the Jewish heart and of the imperial standard of Judaism were far from unique and far from consistent, but they nonetheless represented important developments in American Jewish thought. Together they made Jewish identity and community more vague, more expansive, and less dependent on environmental conditions. Far from obvious or inevitable expressions of Jewish thought, they were useful intellectual tools for making sense of—and exhorting proper behavior from—far-flung coreligionists. Leaving aside questions of *halakhic* observance and pious belief, they fostered exaggerated understandings of individual identity and communal institutions, making Judaism both inescapable and triumphant.

## Varieties of Religious Progress

In 1873 Isaac Mayer Wise compared American Jews to their European forefathers:

We live in a day as much as they did in a month and in a month often as much as they did in a year. And yet some people can not see why progress and reform should go now so much faster than they did with our sire.<sup>43</sup>

Ultimately Jewish leaders did not stop with efforts to change and reconceptualize Jewish social life. Wise and many others determined that Jewish practice needed revamping in order to fit an American environment that they saw as not only empty, but unspeakably fast-paced. In 1860 Moldovan traveler I. J. Benjamin had likewise argued that “the events of a year in California would fill a decade in the old country, in the fatherland where everything still goes ahead at an easy, regular pace.”<sup>44</sup> As Wise put it in the German-language newspaper *Die Deborah*, “From the land of stability we have been transposed into the land of quick motion.”<sup>45</sup> The nation was “fast filling up with Jews” and “multiplying congregations faster than perhaps in the whole of the rest of the world.”<sup>46</sup> In the face of this speed, leaders sought to organize and discipline religious change through prescriptions of “progress.”

In the nineteenth century, the gradual and inevitable improvement of civilization became a major tenet of faith and way of looking at the world. In the United States, the growth of the nation’s territory—as well as its economy and demography—endowed these ideas of “progress” with activist and spatial components. The multivalent implications of the term made it, in the words of one historian, a “convenient intellectual rationalization, susceptible of use in justifying other equally vague ideas.”<sup>47</sup> Yet it was not merely crude rhetoric. For Jews and for other Americans, “progress” was a way to bring religion into line with the physical and conceptual speed of American life.

Jewish leaders described a host of phenomena as signs of “progress,” including technological advancements, institutional developments, physical movement, and, increasingly, religious change. The establishment

of congregations, the building of synagogues, and the growth in population—all signs of settlement—showed “great progress,” they reported, proving that Judaism held “equal step with civilization.”<sup>48</sup> Increasingly, however, progress became a battleground for differing visions of American Jewish practice. For Wise, notions of Jewish progress were intertwined with the railroad and westward expansion. Leaving Columbus, Ohio, in 1860, he wrote, “The wheels of time roll onward and disclose new horizons to our view with every passing moment almost.” This was in contrast to his “opponents [who still] speak of stability” or radical reformers who wished to jump immediately to a new form of Judaism, rather than undertake a more gradual change. This framing was more in keeping with the American pastoral ideal than with the Jewish, casting Judaism as the full-speed locomotive disrupting an idyllic traditional landscape.<sup>49</sup> Rabbi Max Lilienthal echoed Wise, describing his life and times as kaleidoscopic: “How quickly are the scenes changing, and what pictures are passing before our minds in swift succession!” He experienced the world as if on a train, new places and ideas appearing in flashes en route to a better destination. America’s newness was linked to its vast distances and its rapidity: it was a “telegraphic” country, marked by “lightning speed.” Building on these images, Lilienthal insisted, “The world seems to be ripe and ready for a new march onward, forward and no human power can retard or prevent the impending change.”<sup>50</sup> For Wise and Lilienthal, progress, rooted in their experiences of technology and geography, was a way to prescribe change that was inevitable, unidirectional, and organized.

These images of a fast-changing Judaism did not go uncontested. In 1849 Cincinnati layman A. A. Lindo wrote to Isaac Leeser, complaining about Wise’s approach to progress. Responding to Wise’s combined natural and technological metaphor of a stream or set of wheels, he wrote that he wanted to know “where it will conduct me perhaps.” Lindo wrote that he, “for one, will certainly not be whirled about with swift wheels of time.”<sup>51</sup> Five years earlier Leeser had described his goals as “calling upon the pilgrim on the journey of life with a serious ‘stop traveller’” and then encouraging him “to return to the safe enclosure of the mansion of the Lord.”<sup>52</sup> Movement here was a threat, to be remedied only by a return to stable religion. Rabbi Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York, editor of the *Jewish Messenger*, built on Leeser’s exhortation with an 1857 evaluation of the state of American Judaism. While it was true that “in everything



which the world considers progress, we have certainly advanced with gigantic strides,” the religious picture was not so clear. According to Isaacs, “the so-called orthodox Jew is not standing still but retrograding; while the Reformer is not progressing, but throwing aside all the landmarks of Judaism.”<sup>53</sup> Other traditionalists agreed that “American Judaism is not progress; nay, it is on a decline.”<sup>54</sup> Judaism was moving and changing, but the direction was up for debate.

While Isaacs diagnosed Jews as moving backwards, Leeser redefined progress itself in ways that allied it with traditionalism. In 1844 he described himself as in favor of “concession to the changed state under which we find ourselves after the lapse of centuries.”<sup>55</sup> He expressed optimism about Judaism’s “progress,” defined as general flourishing and zeal rather than religious change per se.<sup>56</sup> He applied the encomium of “progress” to appreciation of scripture and increased godliness and reported that his motto would “as always, be ‘Onward!’”<sup>57</sup> In 1863 he recognized that “the word ‘progress’ is the favorite one” and worried that “it is not easy to tell on what unknown continent our progressists may land in the course of the next fifty years.” He hoped that “the reflecting portion of the modern-minded may be convinced . . . that not much change is needed to satisfy the people, and that a pause in ‘progress’ would be perfectly acceptable.”<sup>58</sup> If reformers saw lay religious change as chaotic and in need of order, traditionalists like Leeser believed that reform itself was exacerbating the problem through its wrong-headed methods of enacting progress.

In April 1866 Leeser, then sixty years old and near the end of his life, posed the question, “What is the meaning of the word progress?” Engaging in a long metaphor about a leisurely walk, he concluded, “The proper end of progress, physical as well as moral, is to go no farther than a well defined plan will permit and to stop the moment you find the obstacles insurmountable.” Reform, he regretted, aimed “to progress incessantly on a new road, let it lead whither it may.” He admitted that he was a “stand-still personage,” but insisted that he would continue to “labor in behalf of true *progress* and not heed the false glare of either weather-cock turning or circular coming back to folly and superstition.”<sup>59</sup> What Wise saw as an unstoppable railroad, Leeser described as a fickle weathercock. For him, reformers abused the accouterments of science and authority to lead good people astray when they should encourage steady and careful religious



development with the option to stop at any time. For his part, Wise saw traditionalists as stubborn and out of touch with the realities of American life and resented their attempts to slow down his routinized, nonstop plan of reform.

Both Leeser and Wise termed their projects a search for *minhag*, a traditional form of Jewish difference that governed liturgy and custom in a given geographic realm. Even as local congregations fought and divided over the implementation of particular *minhagim*, Leeser and Wise, drawing on the ambition of Manifest Destiny, insisted that the whole of the United States unite under one *minhag*. Wise argued that in all congregations, Judaism “must be American in form, principle and spirit.”<sup>60</sup> To this end, he famously attempted to establish a “*minhag* America,” a uniform national rite. First proposed at the 1855 Cleveland conference, it received widespread support early on, including from Leeser, who hoped that an American liturgy would “bring unity among the members of every congregation, as well as among all the American Synagogues.”<sup>61</sup> By 1857, when Wise published the *Minhag America* prayer book, he and Leeser were at odds over liturgical change, but Leeser did not abandon the idea of a shared rite. At least once, he recommended *minhag Sephard*, the Spanish rite, as a possible solution for American Judaism.<sup>62</sup> Leeser and Wise shared a goal, then, although their understandings of progress ultimately led them down irreconcilable paths.

For Leeser, progress was favorable, but must be limited to a “modernization of external forms.” He emphasized biblically based English preaching and new organizational and educational strategies that would make Judaism an imperial force without violating Jewish law or changing it.<sup>63</sup> Prominent among these efforts were his numerous publishing endeavors, including translations of the Bible as well as both Sephardic and Ashkenazi prayer books, the first Hebrew primer for children, and the first Jewish publication society, created “in order that literature of a Jewish kind might be diffused all over the land.”<sup>64</sup> For Leeser and his allies, progress meant institutionalization and improved practice of *halakhic* Judaism. One traditionalist got to the crux of the critique of reform when he asked in 1865, “What, we ask, shall we say to those nominal Israelites who, desiring some excuse for their want of fealty to Heaven, blame the system for their own culpability?”<sup>65</sup>

While Leeser and other traditionalists bemoaned individual Jews' failure to take advantage of the American environment toward pious and truly progressive ends, Wise and his allies insisted that Judaism needed an American reformation. According to him, "The conceptions of the Ghetto can not stand the benign rays of freedom and the sentiments of a persecuted and oppressed race can not well be harbored by the free and happy citizen," who enjoyed, among other rights, unfettered mobility.<sup>66</sup> Judaism had to become fast, which for reformers meant shedding Jewish ritual and other practices that seemed not only outdated but also cumbersome, rooted, and expensive. And so they de-normativized the second day of diasporic holiday celebration and national fast days as well as prayer fringes, the *lulav* and *etrog* (four species of plant and a citron used in observance of the holiday of Sukkot), kosher dietary laws, and so on, all in the name of a progress that was spatial as well as temporal and economic.<sup>67</sup> In 1874 Wise described as "orthodox and primitive" the material elements of Judaism he had seen for sale in Baltimore, including "M'zuzoth [a parchment prayer scroll affixed to a doorpost], Tzitzith [prayer fringes], Talethim [prayer shawls], Kosher cheese, and Eretz Yisrael [land of Israel] earth."<sup>68</sup> Yes, these practices seemed ill-suited to "the age," but they also seemed to many American Jews, in the derisive words of traveler I. J. Benjamin, "burdensome ballast" in their mobile lives that was best thrown overboard.<sup>69</sup> Whereas Leeser modified the form of Judaism's delivery, making it portable, Wise altered Judaism's content, making it mobile.

Despite their shared goal of *minhag*, reformers and traditionalists eventually diverged in their definitions of progress and its meaning for Judaism. Reformers moved closer and closer to radicalism, solidifying into an institutionalized movement by the late 1870s, while traditionalists continued on, albeit, after his 1868 death, without the animating spirit of Leeser. Both sides would come to relinquish the goal of unity, although they maintained a shared language and confidence. In the United States progress was inseparable from trains, steamboats, telegraphs, and, for Jewish leaders, the movement of their constituents in and out of every corner of the nation, to questionable religious effect. In an expanding America with a constituency free to move, Jewish leaders did not want to advocate standing still at the station, and they did not want to move forward uncontrollably with no destination. Progress was a way to direct

unfettered movement and religious change toward authorized, organized, and seemingly coherent—if variable—ends.

### **Straying Hearts, Broken Empires**

Even as they splintered into different sectarian camps, Jewish leaders continued to use the tools of the mobile imaginary, albeit as weapons rather than as olive branches. The persistence of a shared language shows that even the fiercest sectarian opponents now defined individual identity and communal institutions as the proper arenas of combat. From the perspective of reformers, “Hebrew prayers exercise very little influence on the heart,” while traditionalists thought that reforms “never have done the least good and never will as long as the Jewish heart is in the right place.” An 1860 *Jewish Messenger* correspondent demanded that preachers “speak words that burn to the heart corroded with sin and error.”<sup>70</sup> In the wrong religious context, these barbs implied, the Jewish heart would arbitrate truth, but there was always the risk that it could be led woefully astray.

Imperial language was used to define particular Jewish institutions as well as the entire community. Wise, in his attempt to make reforms and American Judaism synonymous, used imperial language to describe both, insisting already in the 1850s that “this system [of religious reforms] will and must triumph all over the country and is THE Judaism of the coming generations.”<sup>71</sup> Imperial vigor tended to be ascribed to reformers, and could easily slip into martial language, the banners of colonization turning into standards of war, and not just against indifference. In 1860 Wise described Albany as the place where “the battle of reform was fought and we were victorious and from here the spirit of reform proceeded to travel all over this country.”<sup>72</sup> He endowed his institutional endeavors with imperial pretensions, insisting that the *Israelite* flourished “in Maine no less than in Texas” and later predicting that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations “will reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as it does now from the gulf to the lakes.”<sup>73</sup>

So entrenched were these vocabularies that they could also be used in tandem and to describe ever more diverse aspects of Jewish life. In 1868 leaders of the Ancient Jewish Order of Keshet Shel Barzel proclaimed that “ere long the banner of our institution will wave and be planted within the

breast of every true Israelite.”<sup>74</sup> In 1876 a correspondent wrote to the *Israelite*, describing Sabbath observance as “like a tattered banner from the glorious field of battle.” Nevertheless, the author hopefully insisted that it resided always within “the hearts of true Israel.”<sup>75</sup> Five years earlier, *hazan* Judah Wechsler had insisted that Jews should “instill into [their children’s] youthful hearts love and zeal for our sacred cause” through education, which would cause “young America [to] plant the banner of Judah wherever they find a home.”<sup>76</sup> For the traditionalist, the heart was the last resort for a reduced empire; for the reformer, it was the engine of Judaism’s imperial perpetuation. All of them, however, perpetuated the Jewish pastoral in some fashion. They agreed that the measure of authentic Judaism was individual identity and institutional power that could flourish in the United States as much as—if not more than—right belief or practice.

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In the United States both Jews’ freedom and the threat of Judaism’s destruction were rooted in the ability to move ceaselessly and settle indiscriminately throughout a vast piece of physical space. Jewish mobility contributed to the national American project, creating the exciting novelty of Judaism in brand-new places. But centuries of Jewish history had created a Judaism suited to the European settings Jews came from. Wise, Leeser, and their colleagues and correspondents worked to organize the seeming chaos of this disjuncture, reformulating Judaism in ways that would provide some order and positive meaning to American mobility. Despite very real disorganization and much disagreement on the particulars, Wise, Leeser, and a wide range of moderate leaders believed that Judaism could flourish throughout the United States.

Wise and Leeser tried and failed to make this so through a continental *minhag* and a single religious community. But along with their rabbinic and lay allies, they succeeded in defining the broad mainstream of American Judaism as grappling with unity and diversity, history and geography, locality and nation, community and individual, empire and heart. The mobile imaginary insisted that Judaism, through some amalgamation of these elements, could and should flourish nationally. Whether American Jewry was an empire or a collection of hearts, by the

mid-1870s, no one could doubt that it *was*—in cities and the country, east and west, north and south. Hand wringing about the consequence of mobility was not a sideshow to more pressing religious concerns. Rather, it was the engine of the era's transformations, as Jews—and religious communities of all stripes—gradually made the newly expanded American continent home.

## Conclusion

### The Spirit of '77

In the summer of 1877, two American Jews went on vacation. In June, Joseph Seligman, a Bavarian who had immigrated to the United States forty years earlier, arrived in Saratoga Springs. Although the wealthy New York banker had stayed at the Grand Union Hotel previously, this year the owner, Judge Henry Hilton, turned him away. Seligman, he claimed, was not a refined Hebrew, but a “Jew” whose “countrymen had for several reasons made themselves obnoxious to the majority of the guests.”<sup>1</sup> Among the charges that swirled in the press, in articles given colorful titles like “Hebrew Hate” and “Seligman’s Sorrows,” were that Seligman flaunted his wealth, that Jews gathered together too conspicuously, and that Christians did not want to socialize with them. Perhaps most damning was the charge that “the hotel had been seriously injured by statements circulated abroad to the effect that it was ‘a Jewish rendezvous,’ ‘a Jew boarding house,’ and so forth.”<sup>2</sup> Since Grant’s Order No. 11, fifteen years earlier, Seligman and many other Jews had reached new economic heights, but too many in one spot could still attract negative attention.

A few weeks after the Seligman affair, Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise set off from Cincinnati with his new wife, Selma, headed for San Francisco on the transcontinental railroad. “There are Hebrews in almost all the places on the line,” Wise wrote of the trip. Traveling via Omaha to Salt Lake City and San Francisco, he repeatedly expressed his awe of the remarkable geographic dispersion of American Jews.<sup>3</sup> “I have heard the same somber melodies at the Pacific Coast and the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains. . . . It is wonderful how Judaism has established itself everywhere in a few short years,” he marveled.<sup>4</sup> In Omaha, he spent time with Edward Rosewater, almost fifteen years after the Union telegraph operator had shown him around the Smithsonian Institution, and declared, “It is right cheerful to meet friends.”<sup>5</sup> He found, however, that in many places there was rarely if ever a *minyan* of ten men available for prayer. He estimated that women constituted three-fourths of the congregation on

Sabbaths in California. Young people in Nevada told him, “as for Judaism, they keep that down in San Francisco.”<sup>6</sup> Wise was able to visit coreligionists throughout the land, but he found that while they had become more comfortable and established, they had not become more observant or even consistent.

How should we interpret these proximate events? In most scholarly accounts, they have been described as discrete cases of anti-Semitism, on the one hand, and assimilation, on the other. This logic—of Jews under threat—is common not only in American Jewish history, but in American religious history.<sup>7</sup> Recent scholarship in that field has pushed back against happy narratives of the United States as a land of religious pluralism, diversity, and choice. Instead, scholars argue that Protestantism is baked into the very structures of American culture and society, shaping all minority religions in its image. In these accounts, Jewish identity and tradition are relatively stable essences that risk being despised by, or disappearing into, the majority. The narrative becomes something like this: Jews can never be fully accepted in social and economic life, even as in matters of religion they inevitably conform. Hilton, then, is an exemplar of Protestant power and prejudice, while Wise and his constituents demonstrate the inescapable grasp of Protestantism, whether because of its gravitational pull or its disciplinary conditioning.

While these kinds of narratives rightly emphasize the power dynamics and social structures shaping American religions, they go too far in declaring Protestantism to be the first cause of them all. They create overwrought divisions between what is Jewish and what is Protestant, ignoring their commonalities, overlaps, parallels, and internal complexities. This book has shown that one need not revert to fantasies of pluralist equality to recognize the creative agency of non-Protestant religious actors. Beginning with Jews instead of Protestants and turning to the unexpected and unauthorized religious formations of the road, we can see that the United States is not primarily Protestant or pluralist; rather, it is mobile, both as a product of political dynamics and as a set of challenges that all religious communities must confront.<sup>8</sup>

Wise and Seligman—both German-speaking immigrants born in 1819—achieved the heights of American success and the depths of their disappointments as a result of their diligent movement. Seligman had



peddled assiduously throughout the South on the way to amassing a fortune, and Wise had spread his influence through constant travel and correspondence. Their religious lives—and those they encountered—were not cases of secularization, assimilation, or Protestantization, but rather were reactions to the profound effects of their unfettered mobility. In the European places they came from, they had been classified as Jews, subject to extensive state oversight and limitations on their mobility, but also granted access to official Jewish institutions. In the United States, Jews were only seen—by the state, and by most individuals—as white, a racial marking that granted men, at least, access to new geographic trajectories and economic opportunities. But it also caused profound loneliness, anonymity, and uncertainty, which were simultaneously economic, social, and religious problems. In this context, Jews regularly sought coreligionists for companionship and trust, within and outside official institutions and even in fancy hotels with non-kosher food where their conspicuous social ties might attract attention.

Along the way, Jews embraced more portable and expansive conceptions of what counted as authentic Judaism, going well beyond the strictures of Jewish law. They created congregations, denominations, and Reform Judaism, but also embraced newspapers and fraternal lodges, patrilineal descent and Sunday schools, “kosher style” food and providentialism. Leaders like Wise utilized new technological and intellectual tools in order to argue for the compatibility of religious life with America’s uncertain identities and expanding borders. By *American* Judaism, they did not only or primarily mean a Judaism that was middle-class, English-speaking, or resembling Protestant churches. Rather, they meant a mobile Judaism—one that was portable, individual, and extended throughout the American continent. By the 1870s, this was firmly in place, the outcome of a half century of uneven communal development and constant agitation.

The year of these journeys—1877—was a turning point for the United States and for American Jews. The nation had largely realized its continental aspirations as it entered its second century, the Reconstruction of the South was deemed completed, and the federal government had begun to coalesce into a powerful, consolidated entity. At the same time, new racial, ethnic, and class struggles threatened this surface cohesion. In 1873 railroad speculation spurred economic depression, and in 1875 the first federal restrictions were imposed on rising waves of immigrants. The

same summer that Seligman and Wise took to the road witnessed Indian wars, anti-Chinese agitation in California, the Great Railroad Strike, and a range of other conflicts, not least the beginnings of Jim Crow racial terror.<sup>9</sup> And, of course, a mass migration from eastern Europe was about to begin, bringing over two million Jews to the United States in just over four decades. These migrants would enter a nation wracked by industrialization, urbanization, and new forms of racial thinking.<sup>10</sup> The politics and experiences of mobility they faced differed in degree, but not in kind. They too would struggle with anonymity and uncertainty, although they would also benefit from the religious infrastructure and imaginary that their predecessors had created.

The year 1877—or 1881, the beginning of extensive pogroms in Russia—was not the real beginning of American Jewish history. Nor did it inaugurate a century of what scholars have described as either declining Christian influence or an ascendant Protestant secular.<sup>11</sup> Rather, for Jews and for Christians, 1877 was the catalyst for a rising tide of institutionalization and denominational identity that would peak during the Protestant-Catholic-Jew moment of the 1950s. Then, denominational institutions, in conjunction with Cold War nationalism, managed to create at least some illusion of orderly, clear-cut identities and communities.<sup>12</sup> Amidst the myriad societal transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, these started to unravel, replaced with postmodern forms of eclectic religious expression. In the American Jewish community, high midcentury levels of synagogue affiliation have now been disrupted by Jews whose identities are post-denominational and, as Shaul Magid has argued, post-ethnic. Independent *minyanim*, Jewish retreat centers, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, and others purposefully depart from the financial, social, and/or ideological modes of the American Jewish establishment, aided and abetted by the Internet. They function through funding by wealthy donors or on collectivist or consumer models rather than through membership dues and fuel understandings of Jewish belonging unmoored from *halakhic* observance or traditional beliefs. They also disrupt establishment divisions, whether those between public and private or between Judaism and other intellectual and religious traditions. Such approaches to Judaism, I argue, are not new, and have never gone away, but have long been characteristic of religion in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

While the tools and contexts of mobility have changed dramatically since 1877, they have largely continued to encourage and reward individualism and invisibility throughout the continent. Against this backdrop, religion is a mobile assemblage of resources for living, collected in and out of secular and multireligious networks and markets, institutions and ideologies. This is not to reduce religion to social conditions, but to demonstrate its inextricability from them. Immigrant religion today certainly cannot be understood apart from its frenetic geographic trajectories, shaped by the security state, the neoliberal economy, and the Internet age, but neither can the religious lives of white Protestants or even of “nones,” those with no declared religious affiliation. All seek stability, identity, and community in congregations and exclusive denominations, to be sure, but also—and indeed, arguably more so—through social media, consumer products, family practices, and multiple traditions.<sup>14</sup> What preachers say and whether people belong to congregations are only two pieces of evidence, among many others, for understanding American religions. It is the job of scholars—and of citizens—to explore these pathways, avoiding preconceptions and painting with a narrow brush. Indeed, in the United States, there are no official Methodists or Mormons, Pentecostals or Presbyterians, Buddhists or Baptists, Mennonites or Muslims, but neither are there totally unencumbered religious actors. There are only raced, classed, and gendered Americans who use the tools at their disposal to create religious lives.

Postmodern religion and the ever-present efforts to overcome or classify it are in some ways fundamental responses to the facts of American life, its legal and economic structures, its political modes, and its geography. Indeed, the United States—in the nineteenth century and today—is best described as lonely, isolating, suspicious, and above all, mobile. If we narrate American religious history starting with Jews—and not only with the Isaac Mayer Wises, but with the Joseph Seligmans and the Edward Rosewaters—we can see that coherent institutions, identities, and ideologies are neither inevitable nor permanent. Rather, they have long been strategic fictions for dealing with a particular politics of mobility. Since the nation’s earliest days, Americans have been creating religion on their own and on the road. Arguably, we are all mobile Jews,

grappling religiously—in all kinds of configurations—with the uncertainties, possibilities, and limits of American life.

# Notes

## Abbreviations

JA: American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati

JHS: American Jewish Historical Society, New York and Boston

FA: Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History, Breman Museum, Atlanta

ICJAL: Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

HS: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond

## Introduction

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## Chapter 1. Wandering Sons of Israel

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- 5 Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

- 6 Isaac Cohen pass, September 11, 1861, Maximilian J. Michelbacher Papers, Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, Richmond, VA. On the Confederate passport system, see Sternhell, *Routes of War*, 129–40.
- 7 Biography of William Flegenheimer, Mss7:1 F6255:1, VHS. See also Proskauer Family Papers, Folder 2, MS-254, AJA; and Passport, November 21, 1863, Cohen Family Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, P-101, OS1 Passports, AJHS.
- 8 On furloughs, see Raphael Jacob Moses, “Raphael Jacob Moses: A Southern Romantic,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 185. On soldiers’ experience of mobility, see Sternhell, *Routes of War*, 112; and Dr. Israel Moses to Lionel Moses, February 2, 1862, Moses Family (of New York City) Papers, P-1, Box 2, AJHS.
- 9 Whitlock, *Recollections*; A. W. Cohen, *Contraband: Smuggling and the Birth of the American Century* (New York: Norton, 2015). On suspicion of Jewish economic activity during the Civil War, see Louis Schmier, “Notes and Documents,” *American Jewish Archives* 32, no. 1 (1980): 13; and Confederate States of America, Congress, House of Representatives, Special Committee on the Charge of Corruption Made in the Richmond Examiner, January 7, 1864, C.I. 598, VHS.
- 0 Jonathan D. Sarna, *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (New York: Nextbook/Schocken, 2012), x; Gary Phillip Zola, *We Called Him Rabbi Abraham: Lincoln and American Jewry, a Documentary History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014).
- 1 Letters, August 23 and 29, 1861, Michelbacher Papers, Beth Ahabah Archives; Michelbacher next tried to request the same from General Beauregard. “Beauregard and the Jews,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1863, cited in Adams, *Politics, Faith, and the Making of American Judaism*, 66.
- 2 Isaac Leeser, “The Fourth of July,” *Israelite*, July 15, 1854, 3. See also Isaac Mayer Wise, “Contemporary Problems, 1855,” *American Jewish Archives* 24 (1972): 96; and Samuel Myer Isaacs, “The Emigrants,” *Jewish Messenger*, October 2, 1872, 5.
- 3 Harvey Arnold Richman, “The Image of America in the European Hebrew Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century (until 1880)” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1971); Index to America, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, SC-14639, AJA.
- 4 Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, 26, 17–18; R. Glanz, “The Spread of Jewish Communities through America before the Civil War,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 15 (1974): 7–45; Barkai, “German-Jewish Migrations in the Nineteenth Century,” 314. See also Anton Hieke, “The Transregional Mobility of Jews from Macon, Ga., 1860–1880,” *American Jewish History* 97, no. 1 (2013): 30.
- 5 Isaac Leeser, “On Association,” *Occident* 6 (1848): 317, cited in Sussman, *Isaac Leeser*, 43.
- 6 Rudolf Glanz, “German Jews in New York City in the 19th Century,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 11, no. 11 (1956).
- 7 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 12 (1854): 422; Cooperstown, NY, August 12, 1837; August 25, 1839, Saratoga Springs, Sunday morning; Gratz Family, P-8, AJHS.
- 8 Mayer to I. M. Wise, March 6, 1867, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, AJA.
- 9 Cresswell, *On the Move*, 21.



## Chapter 2. Reminding Myself That I Am a Jew

Exodus 2:22; “Sketch of David Steinheimer, Atlanta, Ga.,” David Steinheimer Papers, Mss 26, CFA; 1880, Census Place: Atlanta, Fulton, Georgia, Roll: 148, Family History Film: 1254148, p. 218B, Enumeration District: 092, Image: 0078, Ancestry.com and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1880 U.S. Federal Census (database online, accessed May 5, 2014).

Barkai, “German-Jewish Migrations in the Nineteenth Century,” 312.

See Seessel, “Henry Seessel,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 354–67; Whitlock, *Recollections*; R. Glanz, “The ‘Bayer’ and the ‘Pollack’ in America,” *Jewish Social Studies* 17, no. 1 (1955): 27–42.

For instance, merchant Herman Cone, who settled in Jonesborough, Tennessee, traveled regularly to New York, Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia, and Knoxville. Herman Cone Account Book, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 62.

For instance, Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*; Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*; Deborah Dash Moore, *B’nai B’rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981); Idana Goldberg, “‘Sacrifices upon the Altar of Charity’: The Masculinization of Jewish Philanthropy in Mid-Nineteenth Century America,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues*, 2010, 34–56.

Sarah Gratz Moses to Benjamin and Maria Gist Gratz, August 25, 1839, Gratz Family, P-8, Box 3, Folder 3, AJHS.

Simon Gratz Moses to Marie Atchison, January 25, 1864, Moses Family (of New York City) Papers, P-1, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.

Miriam Gratz to Benjamin Gratz, September 15, 1836, Gratz Family, P-8, Box 3, Folder 4, AJHS. Women usually did not have passports separate from those of their husbands or fathers. Robertson, *The Passport in America*. On women and mobility, see Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail*.

Solomon Kahn to Lazard Kahn, March 24, 1874, and others from March to May, 1874, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, MS-174, AJA. See also L.D., Correspondence, *Israelite*, June 14, 1872, 5; E.J., “Wanted,” *American Israelite*, April 16, 1875, 7; and Hieke, “The Transregional Mobility of Jews,” 22.

0 Isaac Leiser, “Progressive Reforms,” *Occident* 16 (1858): 125–44. See also Wise, *Reminiscences*, 38.

1 David Mayer to family, October 19, 1839, David Mayer Family Papers, 02–039 V/F M, CFA.

2 Goodman, “A Jewish Peddler’s Diary,” 96, 106.

3 Seessel, “Henry Seessel,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 362–63. See also Stix, “Louis Stix,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 312. On hometown networks, see Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), chap. 1.

- 4 William Mack to unknown recipient, November 13, 1871, Bachrach Family, SC-619, AJA; Lazard Kahn to E. Blum, n.d., c. 1870–1871, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, MS-174, AJA.
- 5 Goodman, “A Jewish Peddler’s Diary,” 100.
- 6 Benjamin M. Roth, “An Ethical Letter: Benjamin M. Roth to His Son Solomon, 1854,” trans. Albert H. Friedlander, *American Jewish Archives* 6 (1954): 6–12.
- 7 Raphael Jacob Moses, “Raphael Jacob Moses,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 156.
- 8 Aryah Segal to Isaac Leeser, Richmond, March 13, 1849, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-197, AJA.
- 9 Solomon Kahn to Lazard Kahn, May 17, 1874, and undated, c. May 1874, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, MS-174, AJA.
- 0 Levy, *Freaks of Fortune*, 312; Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1985); Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*.
- 1 “Sketch of David Steinheimer.”
- 2 Haiman Philip Spitz, “Haiman Philip Spitz: A Pioneer Merchant in Maine,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 297. See also Cohn, “Memories from Yesteryear.” Sometimes non-Jews specifically sought out “the people of Israel.” Joseph Jonas, “The Jews in Ohio,” *Occident* 2 (1844–45): 29–31; Wise, *Reminiscences*, 68–70.
- 3 Susan J. Matt, *Homesickness: An American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8; Johann N. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- 4 E. Anthony Rotundo, “Romantic Friendship: Male Intimacy and Middle-Class Youth in the Northern United States, 1800–1900,” *Journal of Social History*, 1989, 1–25; Levy, *Freaks of Fortune*, 192. On Jews and fraternalism, see Laura Arnold Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013), 236–81.
- 5 Isaac Leeser, “The Prospect,” *Occident* 6 (1848): 376–77; Rachel Lazarus to Maria Edgeworth, April 13, 1828, Edgar E. MacDonald Papers, Mss1 M1453 a 7–11, VHS. See also “Forming of a Congregation at Augusta, Ga.,” *Occident* 4 (1846): 389–92.
- 6 Frank, “William Frank,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 303–8.
- 7 May 2, 1862, Marcus M. Spiegel, *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel*, ed. Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), 106, 196–202, 331. See also H. Dinkelspiel et al., Correspondence, *Israelite*, May 9, 1862, 359; Whitlock, Recollections, 96–98; and Clara L. Moses, “Clara L. Moses: War Days in Old Natchez,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 265.
- 8 C. H. Meyer to Isaac Leeser, February 15, 1852, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, MS-197, AJA.
- 9 Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Maffly-Kipp, *Religion and Society in Frontier California*, 165.
- 0 See Sam Goldstone, Correspondence, *Israelite*, May 4, 1855, 341; and Jonathan Sarna, “The American Jewish Press,” in *Oxford Handbook of Religion and the American News Media*, ed. Diane Winston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 1 S. M. Mayer to Isaac Leeser, January 8, 1853, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-197, AJA.



- 2 Henry Herff, "Wanted," *Israelite*, March 7, 1873, 7. They also included ads seeking information about long-lost loved ones. See Ads, *Occident* 19 (1861).
- 3 Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); "Recollections of Aaron Haas," The Temple, Container 15, Folder 4, CFA.
- 4 Yaikof, Correspondence, *American Israelite*, January 28, 1876, 2.
- 5 Haines, "Area and Population, Table Aa1-5." Relatively uncommon in the intensity of his devotion was Abraham Kohn. Goodman, "A Jewish Peddler's Diary," 109.
- 6 April 23, 1864, Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*.
- 7 Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, *Gender and Timebound Commandments in Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- 8 A. Rosenheim to Isaac Leeser, December 28, 1852, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-197, AJA; S. Levy et al., "The Festival of Passover," *Israelite*, May 17, 1867, 3.
- 9 Felix Kahn to Lazard Kahn, April 14, 1871, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, MS-174, AJA.
- 0 Solomon Kahn to Lazard Kahn, October 4, 1871, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 5, MS-174, AJA.
- 1 A. Rosenheim to Isaac Leeser, December 28, 1852, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-197, AJA; A.S.H., Correspondence, *Israelite*, November 16, 1855, 155.
- 2 Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 1, 1856, 29.
- 3 Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The African Supplement: Religion, Race, and Corporate Law in Early National America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2015): 385-422; Charter of Incorporation, Temple Covenant of Peace Records (Easton, PA), MS-370, AJA; Nathan American, Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 4, 1854, 30.
- 4 "Richmond," "From Florida," *Jewish Messenger*, August 28, 1874, 5.
- 5 For example, Sol. Rauh, Correspondence, *Israelite*, February 1, 1856, 243; M. Myers, Correspondence, *Israelite*, December 7, 1860, 182.
- 6 Jacob R. Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman: a Documentary History* (New York: Ktav, 1981), 129; Idana Goldberg, "Gender, Religion and the Jewish Public Sphere in Mid-Nineteenth Century America" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004).
- 7 Daughters of '53, MSS 19, New Haven Museum Whitney Library; Folder 1, X-358, Natchez, MS, Congregation B'nai Israel Records, AJA; Jewish Ladies Aid Society, Mss 109, CFA.
- 8 Isaac Leeser, News, *Occident* 14 (1857): 550.
- 9 Columbus B'nai B'rith Minutes, August 15, 1866, January 27, 1867, August 26, 1866, Mss 88, CFA.
- 0 B'nai B'rith Traveling Certificate, July 1, 1875, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 3, MS-174, AJA.
- 1 "Nix," Correspondence, *Israelite*, November 20, 1874, 6.
- 2 I. I. Jones and D. Salomon, "Congregation at Mobile," *Occident* 2 (1844): 56-57; Judah Wechsler, Correspondence, *Israelite*, February 13, 1863, 250.
- 3 Constitution, December 21, 1852, Temple Beth El (Detroit), Box 2, MS-527, AJA.
- 4 Minutes, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, Mss 151, CFA; *American Israelite*, November 6, 1874, 6.

- 5 Two of them were brothers who lived together and three lived in homes in close proximity to one another. At least two had appeared in the 1850 census in Georgia for Bibb County. Ancestry.com (accessed August 19, 2014).
- 6 Minutes, July 21, 1867, December 11, 1859, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, CFA.
- 7 Samuel Myer Isaacs, "Georgia," *Jewish Messenger*, January 27, 1860, 29.
- 8 "Esox," Correspondence, *Israelite*, October 22, 1875, 2.
- 9 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 12 (1854): 618–19.
- 0 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 15 (1857): 306.
- 1 Samuel Myer Isaacs, "Ohio," *Jewish Messenger*, April 5, 1861, 101. See also Isaac Leeser, "Jews at St. Louis," *Occident* 2 (1844–45): 510–11.
- 2 Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, 57.
- 3 Isaac Mayer Wise, News, *Israelite*, October 14, 1859, 119.
- 4 "A Looker On," "Correspondence from Iowa City, Iowa," *Israelite*, October 10, 1862, 106.
- 5 "Esox," Correspondence, *Israelite*, October 22, 1875, 2; Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 13 (1855): 368–72.
- 6 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 8 (1850): 261–62.
- 7 Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, 140–43. On the U.S. census of religious bodies and Jewish congregations, see Uriah Zvi Engelman, "Jewish Statistics in the U.S. Census of Religious Bodies (1850–1936)," *Jewish Social Studies* 9, no. 2 (1947): 127–74; Biography of William Flegenheimer, 27; Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 13, 1858, 46; Max Lilienthal, "Consecration of the New Temple at Vicksburg, Miss.," *Israelite*, June 3, 1870, 9; Isaac Mayer Wise, "A Glance at Milwaukee," *Israelite*, September 30, 1859, 102.
- 8 Minute Book, June 2, 1865, Magnes Collection on Congregation Ohabai Shalom, BANC MSS 2010/695, MCJAL; Samuel Myer Isaacs, News, *Jewish Messenger*, June 28, 1861, 197.
- 9 J.A., "Consecration at Louisville," *Occident* 7 (1849): 98; "L.," "Chicago, Illinois," *Occident* 9 (1851): 271–72.
- 0 E. Ebenstadt to unknown recipient, Shreveport, LA, February 10, 1866, Samuel Adler Papers, Folder 3, MS-423, AJA.
- 1 William Flegenheimer, Correspondence, *Israelite*, April 26, 1867, 5; October 25, 1867, 5; Biography of William Flegenheimer.
- 2 *Constitution und Neben-Gesetze der Chebra Berith Shalom* (San Francisco: Abend-Post, 1861), 39.
- 3 Minutes, November 6, 1859, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, CFA.
- 4 "Constitution and By-Laws of the United Hebrew Congregation of Saint Louis," October 3, 1841, St. Louis United Hebrew Congregation, SC-10634, AJA.
- 5 J. Wechsler, Letter, *American Israelite*, November 9, 1877, 6; Letter, *American Israelite*, November 19, 1875, 5.
- 6 Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 55–57.
- 7 Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Western Journal of Isaac Mayer Wise, 1877* (Berkeley, CA: Western Jewish History Center, Magnes Museum, 1974), 45.
- 8 "Constitution and By-Laws of the Congregation Covenant of Peace of the Borough of Easton," Temple Covenant of Peace Records (Easton, PA), Box 1, Folder 1, MS-370, AJA. On the civil and regulatory functions of evangelical congregations in this era, see Monica Najjar, *Evangelizing the*

*South: A Social History of Church and State in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

- 9 Some offered different levels based on economic and personal status. By-Laws Article II, Section 1, May 1860, West Lafayette, IN, Congregation Temple Israel Records, X-356, AJA.
- 0 Two court cases reveal expelled members unsuccessfully seeking reinstatement, but only in the late 1870s. Bernard Meister, relator v. The Anshei Chesed Hebrew Congregation of Bay City, 37 Mich. 542; 1877 Mich. LEXIS 316, [www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com) (accessed February 24, 2015); The State ex. rel. H. W. Soares v. Hebrew Congregation “Dispersed of Judah,” 31 La. Ann. 205, 1879 La. LEXIS 55, [www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com); Sarna, *American Judaism*, 16–17, 78; Moshe Greenberg and Haim Hermann Cohn, “Herem,” in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 10–16.
- 1 Minutes, October 28, 1857, Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, Box 1, MS-532, AJA.
- 2 Minutes, May 2 and June 3, 1858, St. Paul Mount Zion Temple Records, MS-471, AJA.
- 3 Minutes, President’s Address, October 17, 1875, Natchez, MS, Congregation B’nai Israel Records, Folder 2, X-358, AJA; Annual Report, October 20, 1867, Minute Book, Magnes Collection on Congregation Ohabai Shalome, BANC MSS 2010/695, OS1, MCJAL.
- 4 Macon, GA, August 17, 5620, Folder 5, MS-197, Isaac Leeser Papers, AJA.
- 5 Bylaws Section 8, Magnes Collection on Congregation Ohabai Shalome, BANC MSS 2010/695, MCJAL.
- 6 September 16, 1860, Edward Rosewater Diaries.
- 7 Minutes, December 4, 1859, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, CFA.
- 8 D. Solomons and John L. Lewis to Solomon Moses, April 6, 1847, Moses P-1, Box 1, Folder 7, AJHS; Shaarei Chesed of New Orleans, buried non-Jewish spouses of members; Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, 55.
- 9 Minutes, January 25, 1874, Natchez, MS, Congregation B’nai Israel Records, Folder 2, X-358, AJA. The issue reemerged six months later. Minutes, July 18, 1874, Natchez, MS, Congregation B’nai Israel Records, AJA.
- 0 Judah Touro to Isaac Leeser, April 10, 1851, Isaac Leeser Papers, P-20, Folder 90, AJHS. See also Isaac Leeser, “Thoughts on the Jewish Ministry,” *Occident* 10 (1852): 225.
- 1 Henry Loewenthal to Isaac Leeser, August 17, 1859, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, MS-197, AJA.
- 2 Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654–1860* (New York: Porcupine Press, 1976), 268; F.B., Correspondence, *American Israelite*, November 19, 1875, 5. See also Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, January 6, 1860, 214. Counting women in a *minyan* became enshrined within liberal Jewish denominations on principle in the 1960s.
- 3 Columbus B’nai B’rith Minutes, August 26, 1866, CFA; Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai*, 74; Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B’nai B’rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity, 1843–1914*, trans. Alan L. Nothnagle and Sarah Wobick-Segev (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).
- 4 B. H. Gotthelf to Isaac Leeser, March 25, 1851, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, MS-197, AJA.
- 5 Harmon and Levinson to Isaac Leeser, December 1, 1857, Isaac Leeser Papers, P-20, Folder 33, AJHS.

- 6 B. H. Gotthelf, report, June 20, 1854, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, MS-197, AJA. See also “Delinquent List,” *Israelite*, June 15, 1866; and “To Gentlemen Whom We Can Not Find,” *Israelite*, November 21, 1873.
- 7 Jay R. Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 75; Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, 20.
- 8 Edward Barinds, “Memphis, Tennessee,” *Occident* 13 (1855): 306.
- 9 Whitlock, *Recollections*, 59–60. For a similar sentiment, see Isaac Leeser, “The Appeal Case of the Charleston Congregation,” *Occident* 4 (1846): 103–6.
- 00 “Constitution and By-Laws of the United Hebrew Congregation of Saint Louis,” October 3, 1841, St. Louis United Hebrew Congregation, SC-10634, AJA.
- 01 Minutes, June 26, 1864, Congregation Tree of Life (Pittsburgh), MS-531, AJA; Magnes Collection on Congregation Ohabai Shalome, BANC MSS 2010/695, MCJAL; newspaper clipping, August 3, 1875, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, CFA.
- 02 Minute Book, November 6, 1864, Magnes Collection on Congregation Ohabai Shalome, BANC MSS 2010/695, MCJAL.
- 03 Members of Congregation Covenant of Israel in Easton, Pennsylvania, founded in 1839, used German, Yiddish, and English for its official documents. Temple Covenant of Peace Records (Easton, PA), Box 1, Folder 1, MS-370, AJA; Minutes, December 4, 1859, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, CFA.
- 04 Isaac Leeser, “The Demands of the Times,” pt. 6, *Occident* 2 (1844): 412; Leeser, “Jewish Settlements through the Country,” *Occident* 4 (1846): 404–5; Leeser, Note, *Occident* 8 (1850): 603.
- 05 Wise, “Contemporary Problems, 1855,” 94.
- 06 “The Constitution and By-Laws of K.K. Beth El, Detroit, Michigan,” *Israelite*, December 26, 1856, 196, cited in Abraham J. Karp, “Overview: The Synagogue in America—A Historical Typology,” in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 9, fn. 24.
- 07 Minutes, March 29, 1868, Portland, OR, Temple Beth Israel, Box 1, MS-554, AJA; A. Jacobs, Correspondence, *Israelite*, January 20, 1860, 267; R. Singerman, “Bloch & Company: Pioneer Jewish Publishing House in the West,” *Jewish Book Annual 1994–1995* 52 (1994): 116; Wm. Friedman, Correspondence, *Israelite*, November 3, 1854, 135.
- 08 Sarna, *American Judaism*, 98–99.
- 09 “F,” Correspondence, *Israelite*, September 12, 1873, 6; Ahavas Achim constitutions, May 1860, December 3, 1876, West Lafayette, IN, Congregation Temple Israel Records, X-356, AJA.
- 10 Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 27, 1860, 30. On decorum, see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 95–96; and Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 79–80; Constitution and By-Laws of the [K’K Brit Shalom] Congregation of the Covenant of Peace, January 28, 1843, Temple Covenant of Peace Records (Easton, PA), MS-370, AJA; Eppstein Diaries, September 27, 1873, MS-220, AJA.
- 11 I. J. Benjamin, “Domestic Record,” *Israelite*, September 20, 1861, 93–94. Rabbi Benjamin Szold’s congregation did similarly. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America,

1963), 142. On Catholic diversity, see Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830–1900* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

12 Minutes, March 31, 1873, Portland, OR, Temple Beth Israel, Box 1, MS-554, AJA.

13 Anthony D. Fels found that of the 13 percent of Freemasons who were Jewish, only 36 percent belonged to a synagogue. Anthony D. Fels, “The Square and Compass: San Francisco’s Freemasons and American Religion, 1870–1900” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1987), cited in David G. Hackett, *That Religion in Which All Men Agree: Freemasonry in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 204.

14 Edward Rosewater Diaries, September 16, 1860.

### Chapter 3. I Prefer Choice Myself

Lazard Kahn to Rachel Meis, c. 1871, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 5, MS-174, AJA.

Half of the American population was under eighteen. Patricia Kelly Hall and Steven Ruggles, “‘Restless in the Midst of Their Prosperity’: New Evidence on the Internal Migration of Americans, 1850–2000,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (2004): 829–46.

Seessel, “Henry Seessel,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 354–67; Memoir, 1917, Jacob Rosenberg Papers and Photographs, Folder 6, BANC MSS 2010/631, MCJAL; Fordon is now a district in the city of Bydgoszcz, Poland. GoogleMaps (accessed February 24, 2015).

Falk Wiesemann, “Jewish Burials in Germany—Between Tradition, the Enlightenment and the Authorities,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 37, no. 1 (1992): 17–31; Thomas Schlich, “Medicalization and Secularization: The Jewish Ritual Bath as a Problem of Hygiene (Germany 1820s–1840s),” *Social History of Medicine* 8, no. 3 (1995): 423–42; Robin Judd, *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany, 1843–1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2002), 49–50.

Leib and Breindl Loewner to Mendel Loewner, December 7, 1856 and August 10, 1859, Loewner Family of Harrisonburg, VA, Folder 5, MS-458, AJA.

Breindl Loewner to Mendel Loewner, July 10, 1869, Loewner Family of Harrisonburg, VA, Folder 5, MS-458, AJA.

M. N. Nathan, “Ceremonial at Galveston,” *Occident* 10 (1852): 383.

To my good child Mendel from mother Breindl Loewner, n.d.; To Sall + Guste from Father, postscript December 14, Loewner Family of Harrisonburg, VA, Translated Letters, Folder 5, MS-458, AJA.

“Fortunately, the baby died. Could happen to him like to Jonas Heller who was forced to marry a poor girl.” August 9, 1859, Loewner Family of Harrisonburg, VA, Translated Letters, Folder 5, MS-458, AJA.

0 Steven M. Lowenstein, “The Beginning of Integration, 1780–1870,” in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany*, ed. Marion Kaplan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107–11.

1 Christine Elizabeth Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For an example of marrying on a return trip to Europe, see Seessel, “Henry Seessel,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 363–64.

2 Leeser, “Jews at St. Louis.”

3 “Montana,” Correspondence, *Israelite*, June 13, 1873, 6.

4 Lowenstein, “The Beginning of Integration,” 168; Todd Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold: Conversion and Radical Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 79; Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Michael Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

5 Isaac Leeser, “The Consecration at New Orleans,” *Occident* 8 (1850): 109–19.



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- 1 "Betrothals," *Israelite*, July 12, 1867, 3.
- 2 Rahle Abals to Isidor, Stockton, December 16, 1858 (original in Yiddish, trans. Layahe Lohs), BANC MSS 2010/514, MCJAL.
- 3 Felix Kahn to Lazard Kahn, April 25, 1871, Lazard Kahn Collection, AJA.
- 4 Moses Greensfelder to Carrie Levi, May 3, 1870.
- 5 Typescript of Diary of Rachel Rosalie Phillips, February 15, 1864, David M. Klein Papers, Folder 2, MS-695, AJA.
- 6 Anne C. Rose, *Beloved Strangers: Interfaith Families in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).
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- 8 "Nix," Correspondence, *Israelite*, February 11, 1876, 5.
- 9 "Constitution and By-Laws of the United Hebrew Congregation of Saint Louis," October 3, 1841, St. Louis United Hebrew Congregation, SC-10634, AJA.
- 0 "Constitution and By-Laws," Congregation Sherith Israel Records, BANC MSS 2010/720, Carton 1, Folder 3, MCJAL.
- 1 Congregation Sherith Israel Records, Oversize Box 14, BANC MSS 2010/720, MCJAL. It is not clear whether the bride and groom traveled or the officiant did.
- 2 Hochheimer Marriage Records, P-74, AJHS. Elias Eppstein performed marriages in Michigan and Iowa; for instance, December 3, 1871, Elias Eppstein Diaries, 1871–1903, MS-220, AJA.
- 3 Lilienthal stamp on Hebrew lettered document with translation, Lazard Kahn Collection, MS-174, AJA.
- 4 Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 338–39. There were also cases where Christians converted without any marriage connection. See, for example, Isaac Mayer Wise, "Letter to a Gentleman in Kentucky, Who with His Family Wishes to Embrace Judaism," *Israelite*, October 19, 1860, 124.
- 5 Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia*, 142; David L. Lieber, Ben-Zion Schereschewsky, and Moshe Drori, "Divorce," in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 710–21; Ben-Zion Schereschewsky and Menachem Elon, "Agunah," in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 510–20; Caroline Light, "'A Predominant Cause of Distress':



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  - 7 Julius Eckman, “Our Divorces,” *Weekly Gleaner*, January 16, 1857, 4–5.
  - 8 Morris J. Raphall to Isaac Leeser, November 4, 1859, Isaac Leeser Papers, P-20, AJHS.
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  - 1 Isaac Leeser, “Shall We Meet?,” *Occident* 7 (1849): 67–68.
  - 2 Isaac Leeser, “Nashville, Tennessee,” *Occident* 14 (1856): 85–88.
  - 3 Abraham Rice to Isaac Leeser, December 15, 1848.
  - 4 Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Judd, *Contested Rituals*; Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Alexander, *Gender and Timebound Commandments in Judaism*.
  - 5 Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth*; Jill Elaine Hasday, “Contest and Consent: A Legal History of Marital Rape,” *California Law Review*, 2000, 1373–1505; S. Shapiro, “Development of Birth Registration and Birth Statistics in the United States,” *Population Studies*, June 1950, 86–111; Shane Landrum, “From Family Bibles to Birth Certificates: Young People, Proof of Age, and American Political Cultures, 1820–1915,” in *Age in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present*, ed. Corinne T. Field and Nicholas Syrett (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 124–47; David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
  - 6 R.D.C. to Isaac Leeser, August 7, 1866, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, MS-197, AJA.
  - 7 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 10 (1852): 59. Rachel Rosalie Phillips was tutored by her uncle Adolphus in Hebrew. January 3, 1864, David M. Klein Papers, Folder 2, MS-695, AJA.
  - 8 “Schmuser,” Letter to the Editor, *Israelite*, March 26, 1869, 5.
  - 9 Isaac Mayer Wise, “Concerning the Mohel,” *Israelite*, August 20, 1869, 11.
  - 0 “S.,” Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 2, 1872, 5.
  - 1 Records, 1845–1864, SC-622, AJA; Minutes, July 10, 1861, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, CFA; M. S. Polack Collection, P-72, Box 1, AJHS; Prayer book, 1849–1863, SC-1730, AJA.
  - 2 Ads, *Israelite*, March 6, 1874, 7; Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 16 (1858): 262–63.
  - 3 Jonathan D. Sarna, “American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Jewish Education* 64, nos. 1–2 (1998): 8–21.
  - 4 Isaac Mayer Wise, Note, *American Israelite*, October 8, 1875, 7.
  - 5 Reena Sigman Friedman, “Founders, Teachers, Mothers and Wards: Women’s Roles in American Jewish Orphanages, 1850–1925,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 15, no. 2 (1997): 21–42; Gary Edward Polster, *Inside Looking Out: The Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, 1868–1924* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990); Hyman Bogen, *The Luckiest Orphans: A History of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York* (Champaign: University of

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- 7 Lilienthal, "Consecration of the New Temple at Vicksburg."
- 8 Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism*; Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 69–75; News Items, *Occident* 15 (1857): 308. See also Minutes, September 29, 1850, Mishkan Israel, Box 54, Folder J, MSS B54, New Haven Museum Whitney Library; "A Member of the Congregation," "Tennessee," *Jewish Messenger*, October 31, 1862, 131.
- 9 Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, 298.
- 0 *Asmonean*, July 8, 1853, 95, cited in Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery*, 75, fn. 123.
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- 1 Henry Loewenthal to Isaac Leiser, August 17, 1859.
- 2 Minutes, Detroit Temple Beth El Records, Box 3, Folder 3, MS-527, AJA.
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- 8 Jacob Wile, Letter, *Israelite*, February 23, 1855, 259; Jeremiah J. Berman, "The Trend in Jewish Religious Observance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 1947, 51.
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- 6 Max Lilienthal, Correspondence, *Israelite*, November 17, 1854, 148; *Constitution und Neben-Gesetze der Chebra Berith Shalom*; Daughters of '53, MSS 19, Box 1, Folder 1, New Haven Museum Whitney Library.
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- 4 Catharine Hays Myers to Judah Touro, January 4, 1854, Myers Family Papers, Mss1 M9924 Section 17, a 81, VHS; "Funeral of Judah Touro, at Newport, R.I.," *Occident* 12 (1854): 209.
- 5 "Leichenrede gesprochen am Grabe des seligen herrn Abraham Kohn von Liebman Adler. Chicago . . . 1871," Liebman Adler, Abraham Kohn Funeral Sermon, Dankmar Adler Papers, Box 2, Folder 56, Newberry Library, Chicago; "Memories to the Death of Abraham Marks," June 3, 1870, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 5, MS-174, AJA.
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- 7 Samuel Myer Isaacs, "Local Items," *Jewish Messenger*, March 8, 1872, 2.
- 8 Bernard Lemann Diaries, 1858–1867, December 8 and December 22, 1866, Leman Family Papers, Folders 1–4, MS-383, AJA.

- 9 Isaac Leeser, Editorial Correspondence, *Occident* 24 (1867): 461.
- 00 Elias Eppstein Diaries, 1871–1903, July 18–20, 1873, MS-220, AJA.
- 01 Lazard Kahn to aunt, January 3, 1872, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 5, AJA.
- 02 Bernard Lemann Diaries, 1858–1867, May 20, 1865.
- 03 Minutes, May 7, 1865, Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, Box 1, MS-532, AJA. On American Jews' mourning Lincoln, see Zola, *We Called Him Rabbi Abraham*, 146, 167–77.
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- 05 Minutes, November 21, 1866, Columbus B’nai B’rith, Mss 88, CFA.
- 06 J.A.W., Obituary, *Occident* 12 (1854): 376. See also “P.M.,” Obituary, *Occident* 3 (1845): 216; B.H.G., “Obituary,” *Israelite*, August 11, 1854, 35; Isaac Leeser, “Obituary,” *Occident* 21 (1863): 46–48.
- 07 Miriam Gratz Moses to Benjamin and Maria Gist Gratz, May 29, 1834, Gratz Family, P-8, Box 3, Folder 5, AJHS; Rosa Levi Newmark to Sarah Newmark, November 21, 1867, Rosalie Meyer Stern Papers, BANC MSS 2010/604, Carton 4, Folder 4, MCJAL.
- 08 Abraham Tandler to one of his children, November 1, 1871 (translation from German), Julian Mack Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, MS-262, AJA.
- 09 Daniel Levy, “Letters about the Jews of California: 1855–1858,” trans. Marlene Rainman, *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 3, nos. 1–4 (1971): 86.
- 10 Miriam Gratz Moses to Benjamin and Maria Gist Gratz, August 2, 1827, Gratz Family, P-8, Box 3, Folder 5, AJHS.
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- 12 Dr. Israel Moses to Lionel Moses, February 2, 1862; Henkin, *The Postal Age*; Susan J. Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History,” *Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 469–97.
- 13 Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*.

## Chapter 4. 'Tis in the Spirit Not in the Form

Edwin Kursheedt to Miss Sallie, n.d., Edwin I. Kursheedt Papers, Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, Richmond, VA.

Lance Sussman has described this as “selective *kashrut*.” L. J. Sussman, “The Myth of the Trefa Banquet: American Culinary Culture and the Radicalization of Food Policy in American Reform Judaism,” *American Jewish Archives* 57, nos. 1–2 (2005): 37.

On Jewish consumption in a later period, see Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance*; and Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880–1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

Leeser, “The Season,” 1–18; Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, 35.

J. David Bleich, *With Perfect Faith: The Foundations of Jewish Belief* (New York: Ktav, 1983).

Joseph Rosengart, “A Letter from Bavaria: 1846,” *American Jewish Archives* 15 (1963): 17–20.

Roth, “An Ethical Letter,” 8. On Jewish religious thought in nineteenth-century Europe, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*; and M. Samet, “The Beginnings of Orthodoxy,” *Modern Judaism* 8, no. 3 (1988): 249–69.

This is inspired by scholarship on lived religion, the history of capitalism, and church history. Hall, *Lived Religion in America*; Seth Rockman, “What Makes the History of Capitalism Newsworthy?,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 439–66; Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “The Burdens of Church History,” *Church History* 82, no. 2 (June 2013): 353.

Nathan Cohen Autobiography, 37, SC-2299, AJA.

<sup>0</sup> Joseph Jonas to Isaac Leeser, Cincinnati, August 15, 1852, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 4, MS-197, AJA; Sherman, “Struggle for Legitimacy,” 64; Ruth Abusch-Magder, “Eating ‘Out’: Food and the Boundaries of Jewish Community and Home in Germany and the United States,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues*, no. 5 (October 1, 2002): 53–82.

<sup>1</sup> Harry Rabinowicz, Isaac Levitats, and Howard Tzvi Adelman, “Sheḥitah,” in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 434–37; Harry Rabinowicz and Rela Mintz Geffen, “Dietary Laws,” in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 650–59; “Wine,” in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 80–81.

<sup>2</sup> On nineteenth-century American capitalism, see Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*; Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*; and Josh Lauer, “From Rumor to Written Record: Credit Reporting and the Invention of Financial Identity in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Technology and Culture* 49, no. 2 (2008): 301–24.

<sup>3</sup> “Facts and Results,” *Israelite*, August 1, 1856, 28; Roger Horowitz, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 43–48; Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Herman Cone Account Book, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; 1867 Bernard Lemann Diaries, 1858–1867. Isaac Mayer Wise encountered Jews in the pork business:

*Israelite*, January 6, 1860, 214, and July 27, 1860, 30; Sussman, “The Myth of the Trefa Banquet”; “evg. oysters,” Bernard Lemann Diaries, December 7, 1863.

5 “Recollections of Aaron Haas.”

6 S. N. Carvalho, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West: With Colonel Fremont's Last Expedition across the Rocky Mountains, Including Three Months' Residence in Utah, and a Perilous Trip across the Great American Desert to the Pacific* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2004), 170, 177.

7 Ads, *Israelite*, December 3, 1858, 171.

8 Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America*, 86.

9 Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 196.

0 “Jewish Settlements through the Country,” *Occident* 4 (1846): 404–5; News Items, *Occident* 12 (1854): 326–27.

1 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 21 (1863): 167; Berman, “The Trend in Jewish Religious Observance,” 32–39; Isaac Mayer Wise, Note, *Israelite*, April 16, 1869, 6.

2 Henry Loewenthal to Isaac Leeser, August 17, 1859; Wise, *Reminiscences*, 129–30; Minutes, April 5, 1852, Mishkan Israel, MSS B54, New Haven Museum Whitney Library. Although few Jews became avowed vegetarians, they did observe parallels in these dietary systems. See “Yehudi,” Letter, *Israelite*, July 30, 1869, 11.

3 Ads, *Occident* 20 (1862): 2; Ads, *Weekly Gleaner*, February 20, 1857, 47; Ads, *Israelite*, July 15, 1854, 7; Max Lilienthal, Letter, *Israelite*, November 17, 1854, 148; U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Patent 196929, “Improvement in Processes of Preserving Meats,” November 6, 1877, [www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com) (accessed February 24, 2015).

4 Leib Loewner to Samuel and Guste Loewner, n.d., Loewner Family of Harrisonburg, VA, MS-458, AJA; Jacob Ezekiel to B. C. Carrillon, June 13, probably 1842, Jacob Ezekiel Papers, Folder 1, MS-452, AJA.

5 Isaac Leeser, “Caution,” *Occident* 11 (1853): 128.

6 “Yehudi,” Letter, *Israelite*, July 30, 1869, 11.

7 Jonathan D. Sarna, “Passover Raisin Wine, the American Temperance Movement, and Mordecai Noah: The Origins, Meaning, and Wider Significance of a Nineteenth-Century American Jewish Religious Practice,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988): 275.

8 W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 103–6; Julius Eckman to Solomon Nunes Carvalho, March 15, 1855, BANC MSS 2010/513, MCJAL. On kosher wine in San Francisco, see Ads, *Weekly Gleaner*, March 20, 1857, 75. Jonathan Sarna found kosher wine ads in the *Occident* only in 1867. Sarna, “Passover Raisin Wine,” 276, fn. 20.

9 Solomon Kahn to Lazard Kahn, April 6, 1874, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, MS-174, AJA.

0 Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 106; Ads, *Weekly Gleaner*, March 20, 1857, 75.

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- 2 "Communicated," *Weekly Gleaner*, February 12, 1857, 36.
- 3 Walt Whitman, "Doings at the Synagogue," *Aurora*, March 29, 1842, in *Walt Whitman of the New York Aurora*, ed. Joseph Jay Rubin and Charles H. Brown (State College, PA: Bald Eagle Press, 1950), 33–34.
- 4 Sarna, "Torah," in *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010), 2194–97.
- 5 Isaac Leeser, "California," *Occident* 18 (1860): 5; Ignatz Frankenstein, "New Jersey," *Jewish Messenger*, April 6, 1860, 108; Isaac Mayer Wise, "Sefer Dedication," *Israelite*, December 20, 1867, 2; Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 7 (1849): 381–82; Sarna, "Torah."
- 6 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 5 (1847): 414–19; Isaac Mayer Wise, Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 1, 1856, 29.
- 7 Ads, *Occident* 20 (1862): 2; Ads, *Weekly Gleaner*, February 20, 1857, 47; Ads, *Israelite*, July 15, 1854, 7; Sherman, "Struggle for Legitimacy," 65; Samuel Myer Isaacs, "Local Intelligence," *Jewish Messenger*, October 5, 1866, 4.
- 8 Isaac Leeser, Note, *Occident* 5 (1847); J. D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Yisrael*, vol. 1 (New York: Pardes, 1951), 271–73.
- 9 Rosengart, "A Letter from Bavaria: 1846," 19.
- 0 Jonathan Sarna, "Two Ambitious Goals: American Jewish Publishing in the United States," in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 4, *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880–1940*, ed. Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
- 1 C. H. Meyer to Isaac Leeser, April 15, 1854, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, MS-197, AJA; H. A. Henry to Isaac Leeser, June 10, 1862, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 4, AJA; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 82.
- 2 Isaac Leeser, "The American Jewish Publication Society," *Occident* 6 (1848): 411; Bertram Wallace Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954), 45; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 82. On the lack of Jewish books in America, see Samuel Myer Isaacs, "The Israelites of America: An Essay," *Jewish Messenger*, February 8, 1861, 42.
- 3 "Books for Sale," *Israelite*, October 22, 1869, 7.
- 4 Singerman, "Bloch & Company," 114, 122.
- 5 "F.," Correspondence, *Israelite*, September 12, 1873, 6.
- 6 Benjamin Szold, *Israelitisches Gebetbuch für die häusliche Andacht* (Baltimore: Wm. Volmner, 1867); Sharona R. Wachs, *American Jewish Liturgies: A Bibliography of American Jewish Liturgy from the Establishment of the Press in the Colonies through 1925* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997).
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- 8 Edward Rosewater Diaries; Personalized Bible, 1864, Steinheimer Papers, Folder 2, MS 26, CFA.
- 9 Joseph Lyons, "Joseph Lyons: Random Thoughts of a Sick Soul," in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 252; Lemann Diaries, June 11, 1858, April 28, 1859, AJA; Diary, February 8, 1861, Rosewater Family Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, MS-504, AJA. See the correspondence between Rachel Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth, July 17, 1824 and March 24, 1838, Edgar E. MacDonald Papers, Mss1 M1453 a 7–11, VHS.



- 0 Rebecca Gratz, February 23, 1840?, to Maria Gist Gratz, in *Letters* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1929), 274–76.
- 1 Whitlock, *Recollections*, 89.
- 2 Sarna, *American Judaism*, 82; Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, 184.
- 3 15 F. Cas. 396; 1859 U.S. App. LEXIS 707, [www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com) (accessed February 24, 2015).
- 4 Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences*, 45; Singerman, “Bloch & Company,” 120.
- 5 Isidor Bush to Isaac Leeser, January 6, 1851, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, MS-197, AJA.
- 6 Lyons, “Joseph Lyons,” in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 241, 251.
- 7 See the following entries in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: Israel Abrahams et al., “God,” 652–72; Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, Alvin J. Reines, and Richard L. Rubinstein, “Reward and Punishment,” 269–72; Yehoshua M. Grintz, Alexander Altmann, and Gershom Scholem, “Providence,” 648–52; “Afterlife,” 441–42; and Moshe Greenberg, Daniel Boyarin, and Seymour Siegel, “Resurrection,” 240–44. See also Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy, and Mysticism*.
- 8 S. T. Levin to Isaac Leeser, March 12, 1848, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 2, Folder 4, MS-197, AJA; Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 5 (1847): 414. On missions to the Jews, see George L. Berlin, “Solomon Jackson’s ‘The Jew’: An Early American Jewish Response to the Missionaries,” *American Jewish History* 71, no. 1 (September 1, 1981): 10–28; Jonathan D. Sarna, “The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions,” *Journal of American History* 68, no. 1 (June 1981): 35.
- 9 Eliza Kennon Myers to Ellen Mordecai, August 25, 1839, Myers Family Papers, Mss1 M9924 Section 18, a 89–91, VHS; Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family* (New York: Macmillan, 2004).
- 0 Joseph Jonas to Isaac Leeser, August 15, 1852. Leeser was aware of this complaint. “What Shall We Write,” *Occident* 15 (1857): 361–69.
- 1 “Mississippian,” Correspondence, *Israelite*, April 10, 1868, 2.
- 2 Goodman, “A Jewish Peddler’s Diary,” 109, 99.
- 3 Emma Mordecai Diary, May 29, 1864, VHS.
- 4 Leopold Jaroslawsky, “Congregation Sharai Shemaim, of Pittsburgh,” *Israelite*, August 25, 1854, 54; B. Hamburger, President’s Address, October 8, 1861, Magnes Collection on Congregation Ohabai Shalome, Box 1, Folder 1, BANC MSS 2010/695, MCJAL; Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 25, 1856, 22; Lilienthal, “Consecration of the New Temple at Vicksburg”; Leeser, “Jewish Settlements through the Country,” 404.
- 5 “Memories to the Death of Abraham Marks.”
- 6 Goodman, “A Jewish Peddler’s Diary,” 101.
- 7 Simon Gratz Moses, diary, April 14, 1833, Moses Family (of New York City) Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, P-1, AJHS.
- 8 Eliza Kennon Myers to Ellen Mordecai, August 25, 1839.
- 9 Lazard Kahn to Rachel Meis, n.d., c. 1871, Lazard Kahn Collection, Box 2, Folder 5, MS-174, AJA. On the related German concept of *bildung*, see Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 8; and Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, 15.

- 0 Stix, "Louis Stix," in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 315.
- 1 Jacob Friedman to Isaac Leeser, n.d., Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, MS-197, AJA.
- 2 Sarah Gratz Moses to Benjamin Gratz, September 15, 1836, Gratz Family, P-8, Box 3, Folder 4, AJHS.
- 3 Youngs Point, Louisiana, January 25, 1863, Spiegel, *Your True Marcus*, 226.
- 4 Rosa Levi Newmark to Sarah Newmark, November 21, 1867.
- 5 Spitz, "Haiman Philip Spitz," in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 298–99.
- 6 Moses Greensfelder to Carrie Levi, May 3, 1870.
- 7 Abe Weiner to Bertha and William, September 29, 1873, Baer Family Papers, SC-640, AJA.
- 8 Minutes, February 28, 1875, Temple Beth Israel, Macon, GA, CFA.
- 9 "Memories to the Death of Abraham Marks."
- 0 Abe Weiner to Bertha and William, September 29, 1873.
- 1 Raphael Jacob Moses, "Raphael Jacob Moses," in Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews*, 157–58. On Spiritualism, see Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- 2 Moses Greensfelder to Carrie Levi, April 26, 1870, Elbert Family Correspondence, SC-3162, AJA.
- 3 Isaac Mayer Wise, "Eastward Bound," *Israelite*, August 6, 1858, 36.
- 4 Wachs, *American Jewish Liturgies*, 26; "The Feast of Booths," *Israelite*, October 14, 1864, 124.
- 5 Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, 144.
- 6 Sherman, "Struggle for Legitimacy," 65.
- 7 Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz, February 23, 1840?, in Gratz, *Letters*, 275.
- 8 Gratz, *Letters*, 244.
- 9 "Yehudi," Letter, *Israelite*, July 30, 1869, 11.
- 0 Leeser, "Union of Israelites"; Leeser, "An Act of Faith at Augusta, Georgia," 363.
- 1 Sarna, *American Judaism*, 85; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 227–34. On the difficulty of distinguishing Reform and Orthodoxy, see Marc Lee Raphael, "'Our Treasury Is Empty and Our Bank Account Is Overdrawn': Washington Hebrew Congregation, 1855–1872," *American Jewish History* 84, no. 2 (1996): 81.
- 2 "FairPlay," Letter, *Israelite*, February 23, 1855, 262.
- 3 "I.B.," Letters from the West II, *Israelite*, April 11, 1856, 323.
- 4 "A.P.," Letter, *Israelite*, June 15, 1855, 389. For another take on religious belief, see "A Jewish Workingman," *American Israelite*, November 10, 1876, 6.
- 5 Samuel Myer Isaacs, "Is Reform a Success?," *Jewish Messenger*, September 4, 1861, 34. He made similar arguments the next year, in "We Require a Spiritual Head," *Jewish Messenger*, June 20, 1862, 184.

## Chapter 5. A Congregation of Strangers

J. K. Gutheim, "The Jewish Ministry," *Occident* 8 (1850): 8.

Exodus 18:3; Isaac Leeser, "The Synagogues at San Francisco," *Occident* 12 (1854): 367–68.

The Synod, *Israelite*, May 30, 1856, 380.

White, *Railroaded*; Henkin, *The Postal Age*; Rayman L. Solomon, "Circuit Court of Appeals," in *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168–69; Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census*, 52–53.

Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770–1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1985); Donald M. Scott, "The Profession That Vanished: Public Lecturing in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Professions and Professional Ideologies in America*, 1983, 12–28; Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*.

Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 25.

Isaac Leeser, "The Demands of the Times," pt. 1, *Occident* 1 (1844): 517.

Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 26a, cited in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 317, n. 1. On discourses of friendship in the nineteenth century, see White, *Railroaded*, 93–100; and Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). On theories of friendship, see Jacques Derrida, "The Politics of Friendship," *Journal of Philosophy* 85, no. 11 (November 1, 1988): 632–44; and Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, expanded ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26.

For instance, among many other examples, Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 20, 1860, 23; Wise, "On to Richmond III," 4.

0 Isaac Leeser, "The New Year 5622," *Occident* 19 (1861): 244. On this problem, see Leeser, "Introduction," *Occident* 9 (1851): 3; and Leeser, "Thoughts on the Jewish Ministry," 228.

1 Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership*; Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters*.

2 B'nai B'rith Constitution, SC-1160, AJA; B'nai B'rith Traveling Certificate, July 1, 1875, AJA.

3 Isaac Mayer Wise, "The Jews of the North-West—Milwaukee . . .," *Israelite*, September 29, 1865, 101; Minutes, Columbus B'nai B'rith, Mss 88, CFA; "A.A.," "Institution of a New Lodge of I.O.B.B.," *Israelite*, April 27, 1866, 339; Isaac Mayer Wise, "A Visit of the Grand Saar," *Israelite*, February 19, 1864, 269; "Ben Berith," Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 6, 1866, 5; Ben. Meyer, Correspondence, *Israelite*, June 25, 1869, 5.

4 Sam Goldstone, Correspondence, *Israelite*, May 4, 1855, 341.

5 Isaac Leeser, "Introduction," *Occident* 9 (1851): 5; Leeser, "Introduction," *Occident* 21 (1863): 1; Leeser, "The Apathy of Israel," *Occident* 1 (1843–44): 295; Leeser, "Thoughts on the Jewish Ministry," 228.

6 Isaac Mayer Wise, "Vol. III of the Israelite," *Israelite*, June 20, 1856, 404.

- 7 “A Southern Jew,” “Jews in Savannah,” *Occident* 1 (1843–44): 247. See Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 5 (1847): 317.
- 8 Leeser, “The Demands of the Times,” pt. 1; Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 12 (1854): 525; Leeser, “A Suggestion,” *Occident* 10 (1852): 262.
- 9 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 13 (1855): 368–72; Sam Goldstone, Letter, *Israelite*, May 4, 1855, 341; “L.,” Letter, *American Israelite*, December 31, 1875, 6; “Nix,” Correspondence, *Israelite*, February 11, 1876, 5; Max Lilienthal, “Please, Read!,” *Israelite*, August 10, 1855, 36; Joseph Jonas to Isaac Leeser, August 15, 1852; Alfred Ames to Isaac Leeser, March 3, 1867, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, AJA.
- 0 Nathan Abraham, Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 4, 1854, 30.
- 1 “Observer,” Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 22, 1870, 6–7. As Gotthelf told Leeser during one of his trips, readers “are desirous to know something of your doings in other places also.” B. H. Gotthelf to Isaac Leeser, January 15, 1852, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, AJA.
- 2 Leeser, “The Press and the Pulpit,” 3; Leeser, “The Occident,” *Occident* 4 (1846): 5.
- 3 John Salominsky, “A Radical Voice,” *Israelite*, August 13, 1869; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1998); James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009).
- 4 Isaac Leeser, “The Occident, and Its Course,” *Occident* 10 (1852): 514.
- 5 Besides frequent trips in Indiana and Ohio, Wise traveled to the East, to places further afield in the Midwest, and once to California. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 130, 285. Wise’s travel is also discussed in his *Reminiscences* and *The Western Journal of Isaac Mayer Wise*. A few examples of his travels are “Bound to the East,” *Israelite*, October 23, 1857, 124; “A Glance at Chicago,” *Israelite*, September 30, 1859, 102; Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 27, 1860, 30; “On to Richmond,” *Israelite*, June 21, 1867, 4; and “Chicago and Milwaukee,” *Israelite*, February 20, 1874, 6. Leeser regularly made repeated trips in the Northeast and traveled at least once to Saint Louis and three times to New Orleans. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser*, 182. Some of his documented travels are described in *Occident* 7 (1849): 380; *Occident* 10 (1852): 108–12; “At Home Again,” *Occident* 13 (1855): 1; and *Occident* 15 (1857): 197–203. Max Lilienthal also traveled regularly beginning in the late 1860s. For example, “My Trip to Macon and Atlanta, Ga.,” *Israelite*, November 6, 1874, 5; and “Keokuk, Iowa,” *Israelite*, August 3, 1877, 4.
- 6 Congregation Bene-Yeshurun to I. M. Wise, December 10, 1854, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, AJA, americanjewisharchives.org (accessed January 19, 2012).
- 7 Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 25, 1856, 22.
- 8 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 7 (1849): 382; Leeser, “To Our Readers,” *Occident* 10 (1852): 1–2; Leeser, “At Home Again,” *Occident* 13 (1855): 1.
- 9 Isaac Mayer Wise, “A Tour to the East, I,” *Israelite*, May 25, 1855, 364; Wise, *Reminiscences*, 304. See also Judah Wechsler, Correspondence, *Israelite*, February 13, 1863, 250; and “Letter from Detroit, Mich.,” *Israelite*, May 20, 1864, 372.
- 0 Isaac Leeser, “Charitable Institutions,” *Occident* 5 (1847): 36.
- 1 Isaac Leeser, Note, *Occident* 15 (1857): 496; Shari Rabin, “Working Jews,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 25, no. 2 (2015): 178–217.
- 2 Isaac Oppenheimer, Correspondence, *Israelite*, September 14, 1855, 77–78; Solomon H. Sonneschein to L. Honigsberger, n.d., Solomon H. Sonneschein Papers, X-132, AJA. See also

- Isaac Mayer Wise, "Omaha, Neb.," *American Israelite*, December 22, 1876, 6; Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *American Israelite*, June 11, 1875, 4.
- 3 Max Lilienthal, "Our Brethren in the West and San Francisco," *Israelite*, June 16, 1876, 5.
- 4 Sussman, *Isaac Leeser*, 158; Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai*, 153.
- 5 Leeser, "Charitable Institutions," 1; Light, *That Pride of Race and Character*.
- 6 "Mordechai," Correspondence, *Israelite*, November 2, 1866, 6.
- 7 Congregation Sherith Israel Records, BANC MSS 2010/720, Carton 3, Folder 8, MCJAL.
- 8 Janet Rothschild Blumberg, "Rabbi Alphabet Browne: The Atlanta Years," *Southern Jewish History* 5 (2002): 1–42; Congregation Sherith Israel Records, December 18, 1872, Carton 3, Folder 8, MCJAL.
- 9 Gershom Kursheedt to Isaac Leeser, August 6, 1853, Isaac Leeser Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, MS-197, AJA.
- 0 Elias Eppstein to Isaac Mayer Wise, March 23 and 25, 1874, Elias Eppstein Diaries, MS-220, AJA.
- 1 Leeser, "On Association," 319.
- 2 Samuel Myer Isaacs, "We Want Missionaries," *Jewish Messenger*, February 17, 1860, 52; February 24, 1860, 60.
- 3 Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Knopf, 1997); Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism*; Kimmy Kaplan, "In God We Trust: Salaries and Income of American Orthodox Rabbis, 1881–1924," *American Jewish History* 86, no. 1 (1998): fn. 93.
- 4 Isaac Leeser, "Union for the Sake of Judaism," *Occident* 3 (1845); Leeser, "On Association," 319; Leeser, "The Importance of Missions," *Occident* 11 (1853): 86; Leeser, "An Itinerant Ministry," *Occident* 16 (1858): 302–3; Isaac Mayer Wise, "A Visit to Louisville," *Israelite*, April 4, 1856, 314; Wise, "Retrospect," *Israelite*, September 26, 1856, 92; Wise, Correspondence, *Israelite*, June 20, 1873, 4; Judah Wechsler, Correspondence, *Israelite*, February 15, 1861, 260.
- 5 April 28, 1854, cited in Max Benjamin May, *Isaac Mayer Wise: The Founder of American Judaism; A Biography* (New York: Putnam, 1916), 151.
- 6 Isaac Mayer Wise, "Miscellaneous," *Israelite*, September 8, 1854, 70.
- 7 Joseph Buchler, "The Struggle for Unity: Attempts at Union in American Jewish Life, 1654–1868" (Cincinnati: American Jewish Periodical Center, 1947), appendix 1; Leeser, "Thoughts on the Jewish Ministry," 225–38.
- 8 Isaac Mayer Wise, "Union and Reform," *Israelite*, January 4, 1856, 212, cited in May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 263–65; Leeser, "Thoughts on the Jewish Ministry," 225–38; Daniel Walker Howe, "Church, State, and Education in the Young American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 1 (2002): 15; Isaac Mayer Wise, "Our Protest," *Israelite*, October 31, 1856; Wise, "Plan for a Hebrew College," *Asmonean*, August 19, 1853, cited in May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 137; Simon Dealham et al., Letter, *Israelite*, August 24, 1855, 54; Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 139.
- 9 Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census*, 52–53. See, for instance, John Lansing Burrows, *American Baptist Register, for 1852* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853), 4–5.
- 0 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 10 (1852): 108; also *Occident* 12 (1854): 577; and *Occident* 14 (1856): 47.

- 1 Isaac Leeser, "What Can Be Done," *Occident* 10 (1852): 371; "The Jews in the United States," *Jeschurun* 1, no. 3 (1854): 169–75; Joseph Jonas to Isaac Leeser, August 15, 1852.
- 2 D. A. Gunsberg, "Progressive Reforms," *Occident* 16 (1858): 125–44; Judah Wechsler, Letter, *Israelite*, February 3, 1871, 7.
- 3 Leeser, "A Suggestion," 262; and Leeser, "What Can Be Done," 371.
- 4 Isaac Leeser, "Congregations," *Occident* 14 (1856): 409. Jacques J. Lyons and Abraham De Sola printed a calendar that concluded with a listing, by city, of congregations and societies. *A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years* (Montreal: John Loveli, 1854).
- 5 Buchler, "The Struggle for Unity," appendix 1.
- 6 Leeser, "The Demands of the Times," pt. 1.
- 7 Isaac Leeser, "Union," *Occident* 6 (1848): 529–33.
- 8 Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 3 (1846): 526; Wise, "Union and Reform," 212.
- 9 Isaac Leeser, "The Demands of the Times," pt. 3, *Occident* 1 (1843–44): 565.
- 0 Isaac Mayer Wise, "The Conference Again," *Israelite*, September 28, 1855, 92.
- 1 Sarna, *American Judaism*, 98–99, 109; Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 142.
- 2 Isaac Leeser, Minority Report, 7, Proceedings, 1859–1877, Board of Delegates, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 3 First Annual Report, June 1860, Board of Delegates, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 4 Isaacs, "The Israelites of America," 42.
- 5 Isaac Mayer Wise, "The Importance of the Conference," *Israelite*, June 23, 1871, 8.
- 6 Proceedings, 1, 1859–1877, Board of Delegates, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 7 "Texan," Letter, *American Israelite*, July 30, 1875, 6. See also "Yaikof," Letter, *American Israelite*, January 28, 1876, 2.
- 8 Isaac Leeser, "To the Reader," *Israelite*, July 15, 1854, 4.
- 9 Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Correspondence, *Israelite*, September 10, 1858, 78; Leeser, "Union of Israelites"; Isaac Mayer Wise on the *Occident*: "Why Judaism Meets with No Better Progress in This Country," *Israelite*, April 25, 1856, 340.
- 0 Leeser, "Union of Israelites."
- 1 Isaac Mayer Wise, "No Union," *Israelite*, July 18, 1856, 12; Martin B. Ryback, "The East-West Conflict in American Reform Judaism," *American Jewish Archives* 4 (1952): 3–25.
- 2 Isaac Mayer Wise, "To the Israelites of the West," *Israelite*, August 14, 1863.
- 3 Solomon H. Sonneschein to Board of Trustees of Temple Shaare Emeth, n.d., Solomon H. Sonneschein Papers, X-132, AJA.
- 4 "G.J., Philadelphia," "The Cincinnati Union," *Jewish Messenger*, July 18, 1873, 5.
- 5 "Is the Union of American Hebrew Congregations a National or a Western Organization?," *Israelite*, June 2, 1876, 4.
- 6 Second Annual Report, June 1860, Board of Delegates, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 7 Board Committee Reports, Board of Delegates, Box 1, Folder 5, AJHS. See also "Union of Congregations," *Jewish Messenger*, May 4, 1877, 5.
- 8 There were also debates over whether to create a separate order for women, resulting in the creation of the Order of True Sisters. Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters*.



- 9 “Meeting of the Constitution Grand Lodge IOBB at Philadelphia, July 31, and August 1 and 2,” *Israelite*, August 12, 1864, 52, cited in Cornelia Wilhelm, “An Ambivalent Relationship: Isaac M. Wise and the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith,” in *New Essays in American Jewish History*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Lance J. Sussman (New York: Ktav, 2010), 168, fn. 40.
- 0 “Proposition to the I.O.B.B. to Establish an American Jewish University,” November 1, 1866, Columbus B’nai B’rith, CFA; Constitution Grand Lodge, I.O.B.B. Office of the Grand Saar, New York, November 1, 1866, 562, in Minutes Book, Columbus (GA) B’nai Brith, MSS 88, CFA; William B. Hackenburg, Henry S. Jacobs, and Simon Wolf, “Report on Committee of Statistics,” *American Israelite*, June 15, 1877; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 375.
- 1 I. M. Wise to Adolph Huebsch, July 30, 1868, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, AJA, americanjewisharchives.org (accessed January 19, 2012).
- 2 Proceedings, 1859, Board of Delegates, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS. Wise mocked them, despite his own interest in collecting information. “The Board of Delegates—Again,” *Israelite*, February 24, 1860, 268.
- 3 Isaac Leiser, “Minority Report,” Proceedings, November 27 and 29, 1859, Board of Delegates, I-2, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 4 First Annual Report, 1860, Board of Delegates, I-2, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 5 Second Annual Report, 1861, Board of Delegates, I-2, Box 1, Folder 1, AJHS.
- 6 “Proposition to the I.O.B.B. to Establish an American Jewish University”; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 80.
- 7 “Afternoon Session,” *Israelite*, June 23, 1871, 9.
- 8 Isaac Mayer Wise, Editorial Article, *Israelite*, June 20, 1873, 4.
- 9 “The Council at Cleveland,” *American Israelite*, July 31, 1874, 4.
- 0 “Third Annual Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations,” *American Israelite*, July 21, 1876, 4; A. Schwab, “On Circuit Preaching,” *American Israelite*, August 11, 1876, 6. See also “Sopher,” “Washington Letter,” *American Israelite*, August 18, 1876, 5; “Fourth Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations,” *American Israelite*, July 20, 1877, 4; and “Union of American Hebrew Congregations,” *American Israelite*, September 14, 1877, 2.
- 1 “Union of American Hebrew Congregations”; Lipman Levy, “Local and Domestic,” *American Israelite*, November 23, 1877, 6.
- 2 Max Meyerhardt, Letter, *American Israelite*, July 13, 1877, 3. See also S.S., Letter, *Israelite*, June 13, 1873, 6; “Travis,” Letter, *Israelite*, July 11, 1873, 5; De Liew, Letter, *American Israelite*, November 27, 1874, 5; S. D. Bloch, “A Donation,” *American Israelite*, December 29, 1876, 6; “Nix,” Letter, *American Israelite*, March 25, 1876, 7; “Flap-Doodle-Dee,” Letter, *American Israelite*, August 18, 1876, 5; “Israel,” Correspondence, *American Israelite*, October 12, 1877, 2; “M.K.,” Letter, *Israelite*, June 6, 1873, 5.
- 3 “Union of American Hebrew Congregations,” *American Israelite*, November 16, 1877, 7; Isaac Mayer Wise, “Circuit Preaching,” *American Israelite*, November 23, 1877, 5.
- 4 M. Jastrow, “The Reorganization of the Board of Delegates,” *Jewish Messenger*, November 19, 1875, 5, cited in Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, 198, fn. 53.
- 5 “Third Annual Council,” 4; “Fourth Council,” 4.
- 6 Isaac Mayer Wise, “The Hebrew Union College,” *Israelite*, May 28, 1875, 4; Cassi Sembach, Correspondence, *Israelite*, August 4, 1871, 6; “Third Annual Council,” 4; B. F. Peixotto,



- “Reminiscences of Southern Travel in the Winter of 1876–77,” *American Israelite*, April 20, 1877, 4.
- 7 I. M. Wise to Jacob Ezekiel, September 11, 1855, Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive, AJA, [americanjewisharchives.org](http://americanjewisharchives.org) (accessed January 19, 2012).
- 8 May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 260–61. For Wise on this failure, see Isaac Mayer Wise, *Israelite*, August 15, 1856; and Wise, “To the Israelites of the West.”
- 9 Steven A. Fox, “On the Road to Unity: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and American Jewry, 1873–1903,” *American Jewish Archives* 32 (1980): 149.
- 00 Henry Adler, donation letter, February 13, 1873, Hebrew Union College Records, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 1, MS-5, AJA.
- 01 “Third Annual Council,” 4.
- 02 Hackenburg et al., “Report on Committee of Statistics.”
- 03 Sarna, *American Judaism*, 132, 145; May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 297.
- 04 “The Central Conference of American Rabbis,” *American Israelite*, July 11, 1889, 4; Gary Phillip Zola, “Southern Rabbis and the Founding of the First National Association of Rabbis,” *American Jewish History* 85, no. 4 (1997): 353–72.
- 05 Fox, “On the Road to Unity,” 187, 190.
- 06 Leiser, “The Demands of the Times,” pt. 1.
- 07 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

## Chapter 6. The Empire of Our Religion

Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 9 (1851): 429–30; original letter in Isaac Leeser Papers, MS-197, Box 2, AJA.

See, for instance, Michael K. Silber, “Alliance of the Hebrews, 1863–1875: The Diaspora Roots of an Ultra-Orthodox Proto-Zionist Utopia in Palestine,” *Journal of Israeli History* 27, no. 2 (2008): 119–47.

R. Glanz, “The Spread of Jewish Communities,” 45.

Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996); Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*; John C. Pinheiro, “‘Religion without Restriction’: Anti-Catholicism, All Mexico, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 1 (2003): 69.

Aryeh Rubinstein, “Isaac Mayer Wise: A New Appraisal,” *Jewish Social Studies* 39, nos. 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1977): 53–74; Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*.

Isaac Leeser, News Items, *Occident* 10 (1852): 59.

Richard Lyman Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 353–401; John D. Cox, *Traveling South: Travel Narratives and the Construction of American Identity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

Isaac Mayer Wise, Correspondence, *Israelite*, July 18, 1856, 14.

Isaac Leeser, “Jew or Not Jew,” *Occident* 15 (1857): 113; Leeser, “Motives of Thankfulness,” *Occident* 1 (1843): 529.

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